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THE WORKS OF
GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Volumes 9 and 10

Illustrated

Annette began to play

FORT COMME LA MORT
THE CARDINAL'S [illegible] AND [illegible]FAR
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY FLORENCE CRAIG JONES

AND OTHER STORIES
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY FANNY ROUSSEAU-WALLACH

NOTRE COEUR
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
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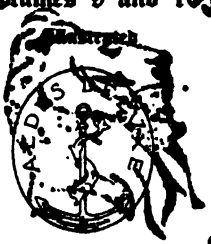

FORT COMME MORT
THE CARESSES AND FEAR

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Fort Comme la Mort

(AS STRONG AS DEATH)

THE large studio was flooded with the glorious mellow light of the closing day. Through the opened bay window a ray of sunbeams entered and softly touched the silken draperies with golden lights, lingered lovingly on them for a while, then gradually grew fainter and fainter and gently faded away in the heavy portieres, scarcely deigning to lighten the gloomy corners, where alone the gold frames of the pictures stood out glitteringly. Peace and quietness seemed imprisoned within the studio, the peace of an artist's home where a human soul has worked. In this room thoughts had lived,— thoughts had been aroused, stirred, spent, and exhausted in strenuous efforts, but now all is soothed, abated and quiet once more. Peace pervaded everywhere. The very furniture, draperies, and great personages whose portraits were unfinished on the canvases, all seemed to repose. It was as if the whole studio had labored in unison with the master painter, struggling with him, and taking part every day in his ceaseless efforts and then were sympathizing with him in his utter weariness and fatigue. A vague odor of paints and turpentine, emanating from the divans and rugs, filled the room. The

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silence was broken only by the quick, short cry of the swallows, as they flew past the open window, and the long confused murmur of Paris, scarcely audible above the roof tops. Nothing moved but the intermittent clouds and rings of gray smoke as they curled their way upwards to the ceiling, after each puff of the cigarette that Olivier Bertin, as he lay stretched out on the sofa, blew out from between his lips.

Absently watching the zig-zag flight of birds, as they rapidly passed across the azure blue of the heavens, the artist was meditating upon the subject for a new picture. What should he paint? Up to the present moment he had formed no idea whatever, besides, he was not a man of resolution, he was not quite sure of himself, he had a restless disposition, so that undefined inspirations would waver unceasingly between all the manifestations of art. Rich, eminent, having gained all possible honors, he was now living towards the end of his life, a man who did not yet know what ideal he had pursued. He had taken the prix de Rome, was a supporter of traditions, evocator after so many others of the great historical scenes; then, modernizing his tendencies, he had painted men of the day with classic recollections. Intelligent, enthusiastic, a tenacious worker with ever-changing ideals, devoted to his art, which he knew to perfection, he had acquired, thanks to his fineness of sentiment, some superb qualities of a remarkable execution, and a great facility of talent born partly from his indecisions, and partly from the varied temptations which had beset his life. Perhaps the quick acceptance of the world for his exquisite paintings which were so distinguished and correct in every detail, had helped in a great measure to influence

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his nature, in opposing his character to that which it would have normally become. Since the triumph of his debut, the desire to please continually stirred within him, although he was scarcely aware of it, and it secretly modified his way and extenuated his convictions. This wish to please appeared in every form and contributed greatly to his glory.

The charm of his manners, the habits of his life, the care which he bestowed upon his person, his reputation for strength and skill as a swordsman and equestrian, made a trail of small notorieties to his growing celebrity. After exhibiting his picture of *Cleopatra*, the first ancient subject he had painted, Paris had adopted him and fêted him,— had made him its idol, and he had suddenly become one of the brilliant, fashionable artists that one meets in the Bois, at the smart gatherings, in the drawing-room of the *grandes dames*. He had been received by the Institute, he had entered it triumphantly with the approbation of the whole city. Dame Fortune had thus led him on caressing and honoring him until the approach of his old age.

To-day, under the influence of the glowing sunset which seemed to throw its lustrous mantle over everything, he was seeking for a poetic subject for his new painting. Feeling a little indolent from the after effects of his luncheon and cigarette he mused over his embryo picture. Gazing into the sky above, he sketched in the azure blue the outlines of the figures,— graceful women walking through leafy woods, or a maiden strolling along a picturesque road — lovers sitting on the flowery banks of a river, all the vivid imaginations which delighted his thoughts. The variable figures

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were ethereally drawn in the sky above him — vague and changeable in the colored hallucination of his eye; and then the flight of swallows in their incessant volatile motion crossed his horizon of blue, and blotted out his figures, swept across the background of his picture as though they were darts of arrows piercing the graceful forms of his artistic dream.

All the figures that he saw in the sky, seemed to resemble someone he had already painted, all the women were the sisters or daughters of those who had been brought forth by his artistic caprices, and the confused fear which had greatly possessed him the last year, the fear seized him that he had exhausted his ideas, that he had made the round of his subjects and drained his inspirations. Before this review of his work, the impotence to dream of something new, to discover something from the unknown held him in its grasp. He got up dejectedly and looked among the unfinished sketches in his portfolio, to see if he could find something that would awaken an idea. Puffing at his cigarette all the time, he commenced to look over the sketches, drawings and paintings which he kept stowed away in an old carved press; then, thoroughly dejected and disgusted with his vain search, he pushed them all back into their places. Throwing away his cigarette he whistled a popular street air, and, stooping down, he picked up the heavy dumb-bells which were on the floor at his feet, and with the other hand lifted aside the drapery hanging in front of the huge mirror, which served him to control the correctness of his poise, and to verify the perspectives; then, placing himself vis-à-vis the mirror, he commenced going through his exer-

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cises. He had been celebrated throughout the studios for his strength, and in society for his physique and manners, but now that age had come upon him, it brought its accompanying avoirdupois. Tall, broad-shouldered and full chested, he now had developed muscles that would have done credit to a retired wrestler. To keep in form he practiced fencing every day and went horse-back riding with assiduity. He still had a remarkably fine head, it was as shapely as in the days of his youth, although his hair was snow white,— white, short and thick; it presented a striking contrast to his piercing black eyes, under the thick eyebrows. His drooping mustache — the mustache of an old soldier,— was still black and gave to his face a rare character of energy and pride. Standing before his mirror with heels together and body held erect he went through all the dumb-bell exercises, with the heavy weights held out at the length of his muscular arms — noting the powerful and easy efforts, he followed his movements with a complacent look. Suddenly in the mirror which reflected the entire studio, he saw a portiere gently move, then a woman's head appeared — only the head was visible — a voice behind him called out:

"Any one at home?"

"Yes! I am here," he replied turning round. Then placing the weights on the floor, he ran towards the door with an agility that was slightly forced.

A woman in an elaborate light gown entered. "You were just exercising?" she remarked as they shook hands.

"Yes!" he said laughingly, "I was showing off like a peacock and you surprised me in the act."

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"The *concierge* was not there," she said, "and as I know you are always alone at this hour, I thought I would come up without being announced."

He looked at her.

"*Bigre!* How beautiful you are, and how chic."

"Yes! This is a new dress, how do you like it? Tell me if you don't think it is very pretty."

"It is charming. An exquisite harmony; the blending of the colors is perfect. We can truthfully say that this glorious afternoon typifies the sentiment of shades."

He turned her round and about, felt the material of her gown, altered with a slight touch of the finger the placing of a fold, as a man who understands the artistic arrangement of a woman's toilet, as thoroughly as a dressmaker. He finished by declaring:

"It is a great success, and suits you beautifully."

She let him admire her, perfectly contented and happy to be thought pretty and to please him. She was no longer young, although still beautiful; of medium height and perfect figure, she radiated with the refulgence which gives to a woman of forty years the charm of maturity. She looked like a beautiful rose that would expand indefinitely until full blown, then fade and wither in an hour. She had the grace and charm of a *Parisienne* who cannot grow old, who is full of life and vivacity, who is imbued with an inexhaustible provision of resistance and who for twenty years would remain the same — triumphant and indestructible, caring above all for her beauty, grace and health.

"*Eh bien* and are we not going to kiss to-day," she murmured as she raised her veil.

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"I have been smoking," he replied.

"Puh!" she said, making a little grimace, and holding up her lips to him. "Just as though that mattered. I don't care."

He bent his head and kissed her on the mouth, then took her parasol and helped her off with her lace jacket with quick, sure movements showing that he was habituated to this little attention. When she was seated on the sofa beside him, he asked with a slight show of interest:

"How is your husband to-day?"

"Oh! he is very well, thanks. At this very moment I expect he is speaking at the Chamber of Deputies."

"Upon what?" he asked.

"Without the shadow of a doubt on beet-roots, or oil of colza, as he is always doing."

The Count de Guilleroy, her husband, was deputy for the department of Eure, and made a speciality of all agricultural questions.

Seeing a sketch on the easel that she did not know she walked over to it asking:

"What is this, dear?"

"That is a pastel I have just commenced,— a portrait of the Princess de Pontêve," he replied.

"You know," she said turning round to him and speaking very seriously, "if you intend to again take up painting portraits of women I shall close your studio. I know what that sort of thing leads to."

"But," he said, "one does not paint twice in a lifetime a portrait of Any."

"I should hope not."

She looked at the picture with the air of a critic, she stood a little way from the easel, then approached,

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made a shade with her hands and placed the canvas in a position where the light would best fall upon it. Then she turned to him and said with genuine admiration:

"It is splendid. You are decidedly strong at pastels."

"You think so?" he replied, pleased with the compliment.

"Indeed I do," she said, "it is such a delicate art, and one in which must be shown a great deal of distinction. No ameteur can possibly go in for that sort of thing."

For the last twelve years since the beginning of her acquaintance with the artist, her inclinations towards the highest of arts had been accentuated, probably on account of her social amenities. She was gently pushing her tendencies towards an ideal which was slightly affected and artificial.

"What is the Princess like?" she asked suddenly.

He gave her all the minute details, which the jealous and subtle curiosity of a woman exacted; but he showed diplomacy in this cross questioning, he passed lightly and indifferently over the personal charm and character of the Princess, but gave exact descriptions of her *toilettes* and jewels.

"Does she try to flirt with you?" she asked abruptly.

The artist laughed outright and declared most emphatically that she did not.

She turned to him and, placing her two hands on his shoulders, she looked at him fixedly. The violet pupils of her eyes, flecked with imperceptible black points like splashes of ink, vibrated strangely under the intensity of her gaze.

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"Tell me, on your honor, is she not a coquette?"

"On my honor, she is not," he replied.

"But even if she were," she added, "there is no occasion for me to worry. You will never love anyone beside me now. All is finished,—for others. It is now too late for you, my poor friend."

He felt the light, though painful touch which grazes the heart of the elderly man when his age is referred to, but he said softly:

"Any, to-day, to-morrow, the same as yesterday, there has never, and will never be anyone in my life but you."

She slipped her arm through his and turning towards the sofa she drew him down beside her.

"Of what have you been thinking to-day?" she asked.

"About my new picture. I want a subject."

"Upon what?"

"That is just what I do not know. Otherwise, I should not be seeking for inspirations."

"What have you been doing, since I last saw you?" she questioned.

He told her about the visits he had received, the dinners and *soirées* he had attended, etc., etc.

They chatted upon all the frivolous and familiar subject relating to their worldly existence,—the little rivalries, the intrigues, the *liaisons* which they knew of or suspected, the judgments which had been pronounced upon the culprits and the chances which might carry them by, or suck them down in the troubled whirlpool which lay beneath their brilliant Parisian life.

They knew everyone who was anyone, he, as an artist before whom all doors opened, she, as a social leader

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and the wife of a conservative deputy. They were both past-masters in the art of worldly French conversation; they were exercised in that ordinary, amiable, half spiteful chatter, which is uselessly witty, and vulgarly distinguished, and which gives a smart and particularly enviable reputation to those who are gifted with such a flexible, smooth tongue.

"When are you going to dine with us?" she asked presently.

"When you like, you have only to name the day," he replied.

"Let it be Friday, then. I shall have the Duchess de Mortemain, the Corbelles, and Musadieu to celebrate my daughter's return; she is coming home to-night, but you must not say a word about it, because I want to keep it a secret."

"Very good. I will remember. I shall be glad to see Annette again, I have not seen her for three years."

"That is true. It is just three years ago."

Little Annette at first had lived with her parents in Paris, but she had now become the last and passionate affection of her grandmother — Madame Paradin. The old lady who was almost blind now, had taken up her residence on her son-in-law's country estate,— the Château de Roncières in the department of the Eure. Each visit that Annette had made to her grandmother had become of longer duration, and finally she had kept the child with her altogether. It was easy for the parents to see that the quiet and free life of the country was far better for the little one than the cramped city life, and as they passed six months in the capital and six months in the Eure, where agricultural and electrical interests drew the Count, it was amicably ar-

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ranged that only on rare occasions should she be brought to Paris. During the last three years she had not once visited the city, for now that she was finishing her education, the Countess preferred to keep her away altogether, not wishing that she should develop tastes, opinions and ideas on social life, until the time arrived for her to make her debut.

The Countess had engaged two governesses with the highest diplomas, and had installed them at the Château with her mother and daughter and, as she supervised the education of Annette, her visits to the country were very frequent. Olivier Bertin had spent two or three months every summer at Roncières, but during the last few years, he had suffered from severe attacks of rheumatism, so had been obliged to pass the season at the health resorts to take the waters. The long *séjour* at the springs redoubled his love for Paris, so that once back in his studio, he had very little desire to leave it again.

According to previous arrangements, Annette was not to come home until the following autumn, but her father had suddenly conceived a project of marriage for her, so she was immediately sent for in order to meet her fiancé — the Marquis de Farandal. It had all been kept very secret and only Olivier Bertin had been taken into the confidence of Madame de Guilleroy.

"Then this project of your husband's for Annette's future has been agreed upon," he asked.

"Yes, and we consider in a very satisfactory manner," she replied.

Then they again discussed the subject for the picture. She asked him to paint a Christ, but he raised strong objections, saying that he thought there had already

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been enough painted, but she insisted and tried hard to induce him to consent.

"Oh!" she cried impatiently, "I know how to draw, and I'll tell you exactly how I think it should be. It should be the crucifixion of Christ, they are in the act of taking Him down from the cross, and the man who detaches the hands lets the body slip. It falls, and drops upon the crowd of people below, who stretch out eager arms to receive and support it. Do you see it? Do you understand me?"

Yes! he understood, in fact he found the conception altogether original, but his wish was to paint something modern, something entirely up to date. Looking at his friend as she reclined stretched out on the divan and noting her foot encased in a perfect shoe and silk stocking, through the sheer fabric of which a glimpse of flesh could be seen, he cried out:

"I have it. This is what I will paint. This is life — *only* a woman's foot peeping out from beneath her dress, but one can inculcate everything therein — the truth, the desire, the poetry. Nothing is prettier or more charming than a woman's foot, and then what mystery it suggests. The limb beneath the gown is hidden from view, and yet we can divine it."

Seated on the floor beside the divan, with his feet drawn up à la Turk, he took her foot in his hand and gently pulled off the shoe, and the foot, being freed from the casing, writhed and wriggled like a little restless caged animal, surprised at finding itself free.

"Now, tell me," he said, "is it not dainty and suggestive? It is far more suggestive than the hand."

"Show me your hand, Any."

She wore long kid gloves reaching up to the elbow.

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Taking the top of the glove she drew it with a quick, sliding movement from her arm, turning it in the manner that one would peel off the skin of a snake.

He looked at her white arm, so rapidly undressed that it gave rise to the thought of a perfect and bold nudity. She held out her hand to him letting it bend slightly from the wrist. The diamond rings glittered on her slim fingers, and the pink nails delicately filed looked like amorous claws growing at the end of a tiny paw.

Olivier Bertin softly caressed it in admiration; he moved and turned the fingers about as though they were flesh playthings.

"How strange it is," he said musingly, "that these tiny members can do so much, they are so intelligent and adroit, they can do anything, make lace, books, houses, pyramids, locomotives, cooking, or caresses — caressing is what they most excel in." He pulled off her rings one by one and when it came to the turn of her wedding ring, the plain circle of gold, he smilingly looked into her eyes, and murmured as he touched it: "*The Law.* Let us salute it."

"Fool," she cried, turning from him coldly.

He always seemed to wish to joke, he had the tendency that the French have of mingling a semblance of irony with the most serious subjects and often he saddened her without intending to do so, without realizing the subtle distinctions of women or discerning the limits of the sacred liens.

She felt it deeply when he spoke of their relationship, in a tone of teasing familiarity; their *liaison* had been of such long duration that he declared it was the best example of love that could be found in the nineteenth century.

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"You will take Annette and me to the *Vernissage*, will you not?" she said, quietly changing the subject.

"Why, of course," he replied. Then she questioned him on the best paintings that would be hung at the next *Salon*, the opening of which would take place in fifteen days. Suddenly, as if remembering an engagement, she said:

"Come along, give me back my shoe, I must go now."

He played absently with the dainty shoe, turning it over and over in his hands. He bent forward and kissed her foot as it hung limply between the hem of her gown and the carpet. It no longer twisted and writhed, it had grown chilled through being uncovered, so he gently pulled the shoe over it. Madame de Guilleroy got up and walked over to the table which was covered with papers and opened letters, some of which were old, some recent. She looked curiously at the *mélange*, touched some of the papers and lifted them to see what was underneath.

"So you are going to disorder my disorder?" he said as he came behind her.

Without replying or looking up she asked:

"Who is the man who wants to buy your picture — 'The Bathers.'"

"An American, whom I do not know," he replied.

"Have you yet consented to sell 'The Street Singers?'".

"Yes. It is sold for ten thousand francs."

"You have done very well with it, it was very nice, but really nothing exceptional. Good-bye, dear."

She held her cheek to him which he brushed with a light kiss.

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Then she disappeared behind the portieres, saying as she went:

"Remember, Friday at eight o'clock. No! I do not wish you to escort me. You know that very well. *Au revoir.*"

When she had gone, he lit a cigarette and commenced to walk slowly up and down his studio. He was thinking. He recalled the beginning of their acquaintance, his thoughts went back many years; incidents of long ago came back to his memory, he recalled others and fastened them together, making a chain of interesting souvenirs.

It had commenced at a time when he was beginning to shine as a star on the horizon of Paris, when painters were monopolizing all the favor of the public, when they moved into the richest quarters and dwelt in magnificent houses which they gained with a few strokes of the brush. After he returned from Rome, in 1864, he had lived for a few years without success, without note, then, in 1868, he exhibited his *Cleopatra,* and suddenly all was changed. Everyone was talking of his work, he was extolled to the skies, both by the critics and by the public. In 1872, after the war, after the death of Henri Regnault had made for all his colleagues a sort of pedestal of glory, he painted a bold subject, a "*Jocaste*" which classed him among the most daring painters of the epoch. Although this achievement was judiciously original, it was at the same time approved of by the academies. In 1873, the highest medal placed him *hors concours* with his "*Jewess of Algiers*" which he painted after his return from a voyage in Africa, then a portrait of the Princess de Salia, in 1874, gave him the distinction of being the best portrait painter of

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the day. From then on he became the idolized painter of the *Parisienne* and the *Parisiennes;* he interpreted in the most ingenious and skillful manner their grace, their charm, and their character. In a few months all the women who formed the élite of the French aristocracy, solicited the favor of being portrayed by him. He did not accede to all requests, and those whom he did paint, he made pay an exorbitant price.

Then, when he had become society's pet artist, he saw one day at the home of the Duchess de Mortemain a young woman in deep mourning, who was leaving the house as he entered. He was dazzled with a lovely vision of grace and charm. He inquired her name and learnt that she was the Countess de Guilleroy, wife of a Normandy squire,— an agriculturist, and deputy for the domain; that she was in mourning for her father-in-law; that she was clever, witty, very much admired and greatly sought after. Moved by the vision that had charmed his artistic eye, he exclaimed: "Ah! there is a woman whose portrait I would willingly paint."

The next day his words were repeated to the Countess, and he received the same evening a dainty blue tinted note written in an aristocratic, fine handwriting which read:

Monsieur:

The Duchess de Mortemain has just called upon me, and informed me that you would be willing to make one of your masterpieces with my poor face. I would trust it to you with pleasure, if I were sure you had not spoken at random, and that you saw in me some-

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thing that could be reproduced and idealized by you.

Believe, *Monsieur*, in my distinguished sentiments.

ANNE DE GUILLEROY.

He replied by asking when he might call upon her, and was invited without ceremony to take luncheon with the Count and Countess on the following Monday. They lived on the first *étage* of a large and luxurious house on the Boulevard Malesherbes. After walking through the lofty *salon* hung with blue silk, he was shown into a sort of boudoir hung with pale tapestries of the last century,—Watteau tapestries in the most delicate tones and shadings. The charming subjects seemed as though they were made, designed, and executed by workers dreaming of love. The Countess soon appeared. She walked so lightly that he had not heard her coming through the outer room, and he was surprised to see her beside him. She held out her hand to him cordially, and said, as though they were old friends:

"Well, then it is true, you really would like to paint my portrait?"

"I shall be most happy to do so, Madame," he replied, bending over her hand in a courteous manner.

Her straight black gown made her look very slim, and gave her a youthful, girlish look, but the sombre color seemed out of keeping with her sunny, smiling face, framed in the heavy masses of blonde hair. The Count entered holding by the hand a little girl of six years. Madame de Guilleroy presented him.

"My husband," she said simply.

He was a man of short stature, without mustache: his hollow cheeks were darkly tinted under the skin

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from his shaved beard, two long lines stretched from his high cheek bones to his chin. His hair was brushed flatly back from his forehead, which gave him the look of a priest or an actor. His manners were polished in the extreme. He thanked the painter with a superfluity of smooth phrases which bespoke the orator. Yes! for a long time he had wanted his wife's portrait painted, and certainly it was Mr. Olivier Bertin whom he would have chosen if he had not feared a refusal, for he knew how greatly he was besieged with requests. It was understood with a great deal of politeness on the part of both men, that Madame should be escorted to the studio by her husband on the following day. Although, he suggested, would it not be better, as she was wearing deep mourning, to wait a little while; but the painter declared that he wished to interpret the first impression he had received, he wanted to seize the contrast of the severe and sombre coloring of her garments, against her face so full of life and delicacy of feature, and radiant beneath the halo of golden hair. So the next day she went with her husband and the following days with her little girl whom they sat before a table piled high with picture books.

Olivier Bertin, according to his custom, was very reserved. These women of the world disturbed his serenity, because he scarcely understood them. He imagined them to be all *blasé*, frivolous, hypocritical and dangerous. He had had many adventures with the *demi-mondaines* — adventures that were due solely to his celebrity, his gay nature, his physique and athletic form. He liked the women of the half-world, he was one with them, he enjoyed the free habits, the broad talk, the amusing and gay company of the studios, and

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green-rooms, which he frequented. He only belonged to the society world for the glory, not for any sentiment; there his pride was gratified, there he received congratulations and orders, there he paraded before the beautiful women who complimented and flattered him, but to whom he never made love. He did not permit himself any bold pleasantry or spicy wit before them, and so he passed for having *bon ton.* Each time that one of them came to see him, he had felt, despite the advances which she had made to please him, the disparity of caste, that caste which even though they meet frequently, opposes the mingling of the Bohemian artist and the society woman. Behind the admiration and the smile which, with women, is always a little artificial, he divined the obscure mental reserve of a being who judged herself of a superior quality. These observations resulted in his showing a little more pride, his manners were almost haughty, his conversation a shade more respectful. And so, side by side, with the dissimulated vanity of a *parvenu* treated on terms of equality with the *noblesse,* was the pride of a man who owes to his talent an analogous position — a position which, to those with whom he associated, was due them by their birth. They spoke of him with slight surprise. "How very well bred" they remarked. This surprise, although it flattered his vanity, at the same time offended his pride, for it indicated a difference.

The painter's intentional and ceremonious gravity slightly embarrassed Madame de Guilleroy. She could find nothing to say to this man who was so reserved and cold, and had the reputation for being so clever.

After having placed her little daughter at the table,

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she seated herself in a lounge chair near to the easel upon which stood the picture already in progress. She attempted to give the right expression to her physiognomy according to the artist's directions.

In the middle of the fourth sitting he stopped and said abruptly:

"What amuses you most in your life, Madame?"

She looked at him in embarrassment. "I don't know," she answered. "Why do you ask me that question?"

"I want to get a *happy* look in your eyes, I have not seen one yet."

"Well, then, make me talk a little," she said, smiling up at him. "I love talking."

"Are you gay then?"

"Yes! very gay."

"Let us talk then, Madame."

He made the remark "Let us talk then" in his most serious manner, and then commenced to paint again. And so they chatted on various subjects, he trying to find a theme which would be of mutual interest.

They commenced by exchanging their observations on people whom they both knew. Then they spoke of themselves, which is the most interesting and agreeable topic for a tête-à-tête chat.

When they met the next day they were far more at their ease, and Bertin, seeing that he pleased and amused her, told her the details of his artist life, and related his adventures in the gay and witty manner which was characteristic of him. Accustomed to the polished brilliancy of the men of letters she met in the drawing-rooms of her friends, she was surprised and delighted at his droll and animated chatter, which came

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as a distinct surprise after his former aloofness. His amusing talk sparkled with irony, and found expression so ingenuously, that she soon found herself replying in the same tone, in a daring although refined manner. In eight days she was conquered and bewitched by his good humor, his frankness, and his utter simplicity; and he, on the other hand, had altogether forgotten his prejudices against *les élegantes* and would have willingly affirmed that they alone, possessed real fascination and charm. Standing before his canvas, painting all the time, sometimes advancing, sometimes receding in his work with the movement of an artist who is combating, he would speak out his thoughts, his hopes, and ambitions to the pretty blonde and black woman who sat before him, as though he had known her all his life. *Blonde and black* — she looked as though she typified sunshine and grief; she laughed so much as she listened to him, and replied with such animation, that she lost her pose at every moment.

He would suddenly move away from his easel and stand looking at her with his head held sideways, and eyes half closed; then he would come quite near to her, to note the slightest shades of her face, the fleeting expressions, and he would seize and render that which is, in a woman's face, far more than the visible appearance — the emanation of ideal beauty,— the reflection of *something* which one feels but does not know, the intimate and redoubtable grace characteristic to each one, which makes one in particular loved passionately by someone, but not by another.

One afternoon the little girl came and stood before the canvas; for a moment or so she was silent, then she looked up at the artist with serious eyes and said:

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"That is just like my mamma." He took her up in his arms and kissed her: he was flattered by the naive homage to the resemblance of his work. Another day, when she was sitting quietly at the table with her picture books, she looked up suddenly and said in a sad little voice: "Oh! mamma, I am *so* tired of being here." The painter was so touched by the child's first complaint that the next day he had sent up to the studio a quantity of beautiful toys. The little Annette was amazed at the sight of such a grand display, and at once began contentedly and with infinite care and thought to put them in order, so as to be able to play with them, one after another just as the fancy would seize her. From that day she loved the artist as a child can love, with that sweet, caressing confidence and trust which makes them so adorable.

Madame de Guilleroy enjoyed the visits to the studio; on account of the death of her father-in-law, she was unable to go into society this winter, so, as the gayety of the Paris social whirl was denied her, all the pleasure of her life was found in the studio.

Daughter of a rich French merchant who had been dead several years and of a mother who was a confirmed invalid, and whose health laid her on a sick bed six months out of the twelve, she had become, when quite a young girl, an experienced housekeeper, a perfect hostess, and possessed a *savoir faire* that is rarely found in a girl of tender years. She performed the honors of her parents' home and used the greatest discrimination in the selection of their guests, she knew how to smile, talk, and had that exquisite tact which put all with whom she came in contact at their ease.

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When her father introduced the Count de Guilleroy to her as her future husband, she understood at once what advantages such a marriage would bring, and frankly admitted them. She thought the matter over calmly, and taking all into consideration, she argued in a philosophical manner that one could not have everything, and that there was the good and the bad in every situation in life. Once launched in society she was sought after by all, for she was pretty and clever. She met many men who tried to win her favor, but not once did she lose her calm serenity. The compliments they paid her flattered her, the passions she aroused amused her — that is, so long as she was able to ignore them, and when she passed a *soirée* surrounded by the homage and admiration of all the men, she felt like a woman who had accomplished her mission on this earth. She had led this existence for seven years without being bored, without appearing to find the life monotonous. The incessant excitement of the social whirl, the men of her retinue — politicians, financiers, or the idle aristocracy, amused her as actors on a stage, therefore she did not take them too seriously.

The painter pleased her, at first because he was so different from the rest. She was happy at the studio, it was so amusing, she laughed gayly, was high spirited; and then he pleased her because he was handsome, strong and celebrated. No women, even though they may pretend to be, are entirely indifferent to physical assets and fame. She was flattered to have inspired in this connoisseur of woman's beauty a desire to paint her, he was an artist who was so difficult to please. She discovered in him an active and cultivated

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delicacy of imagination, a fund of intelligence, and a colored *fantaisie* which seemed to enhance her most trivial comments.

A rapid intimacy grew up between them, and the warm hand shake which they gave when meeting seemed each day to mingle something of the sentiments of their hearts. Then, without serious thought, without premeditating and wrong doing, she felt grow within her the natural desire to tempt him, and to be loved by him. She had not taken advantage of their intercourse, she had contrived nothing, she was merely a coquette, displaying more charm, as a woman instinctively does towards the man who pleases her above all others. So she showed him in all her ways, looks and smiles that gleam of seduction which envelopes a woman whose soul is awakened to the need of being loved. She said flattering things to him, which signified clearly that she liked him, and she encouraged him to talk of himself, listening with great attention to show how much he interested her.

He would stop painting to sit down beside her, and in the emotion which was born of the desire to please her, he had moods of poetry, of gayety, of philosophy, according to the moment. She was amused when he was gay, when he was thoughtful she tried to follow him in the development of his thoughts, although not always succeeding, but, even when she was thinking of something else, she had a knack of appearing to listen with rapt attention, and an air of having so well understood him, that he dreamed on, exalted and stirred to the depths of his nature to think that, at last, he had found one upon whom his thoughts could fall, like grains on a fertile soil.

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The portrait progressed and was strikingly true, the painter had now arrived at that state of emotion necessary to discover all the qualities of his model, and to express them with that convincing ardor which is the inspiration of all true artists. Leaning towards her to note the expression of her face, the coloring of her flesh, the shading of her skin, the glance and the limpidity of her eyes, all the secrets of her physiognomy, he was impregnated with her like a sponge that is soaked with water,—he transported to his canvas this emanation of abashed charm which the intensity of his look had brought forth, and as it flowed like a wave from his thoughts to his brush, he became stupefied and intoxicated drinking in thirstily the grace of the woman. She knew that she bewitched him, she was quite happy, it was such a fascinating game she was playing, so she went on gayly making her victory more and more sure. She felt the animation herself, there came to her an emotion she had not known before, which gave her life a new flavor and awoke in her a mysterious joy. When she heard him spoken of by her friends, her heart would beat quickly, she wished to cry out, it was one of those wishes that are never expressed by the lips in words, had she given it verbal expression she would have cried: "He loves me! He loves me!" She was glad when they praised his talent, and perhaps, woman-like, she was still more glad when they praised his looks. When she was alone in her room thinking of him, she felt that she had really made a firm friend, one who would always remain contented with merely a cordial handshake. Very often, in the middle of a sitting, he would put down his palette and brush brusquely, and taking

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little Annette in his arms would tenderly kiss her eyes, and her hair while looking at the mother as though to say: "It is you, not the little one, that I am caressing."

On some occasions Madame de Guilleroy did not bring the child, she came alone to the studio, and on those days no work was done, but they talked to advantage.

One afternoon she was late. It was towards the end of February, the day was intensely cold. Bertin had come in early, as he always did the day he was expecting her, for he hoped that she might arrive before the hour fixed for the sitting. He waited for her, walking with long strides up and down the room smoking his cigarette. He asked himself again for the hundredth time in the last few days: "Is this love?" He did not know, for he had not felt the true sentiment before. He had had many infatuations, some had passed quickly, others had lasted several months, but he knew that they were *only* infatuations — not love. To-day he was amazed at the strength of the emotion he felt. Did he love her? He had never thought of the possibility of possessing her. Up to now almost as soon as a woman attracted him desire had encroached upon his sentiments, making him hold out his arms to her as though to gather a fruit, desire had come, even before his intimate thoughts had been ever deeply moved by her presence or by her absence. But the wish to possess this woman had scarcely awakened, it seemed shadowed and hidden behind a sentiment far more powerful.

Olivier Bertin had always thought that love began by dreaming, by poetic ecstasies, but this agitation he was now feeling was quite the contrary, it was an in-

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definable emotion which seemed to him to bear far more a physical status than a moral. He was nervous, excited and anxious, as one is when a malady is germinating within one, although, after carefully analyzing his feelings, he admitted there was nothing sad or painful which thus excited his blood to fever point. He did not deceive himself. He knew that Madame de Guilleroy was the cause, and that, when he saw her again, his anguish would be redoubled. It was not that he felt drawn to her by a transport of all his being, but he felt that she was ever present, though invisible to his eyes,— her soul was near to him always. When she left him she seemed to have left with him some subtle and inexpressible part of herself. What was it? Was it love? He pondered on trying to fathom the depths, so as to see and understand what it all meant. He found her charming, but she was not the ideal woman that his imagination had created; but why did he think of her so,— why did he think of her more than other society women whose portrait he had painted? Why did he think of her incessantly, and in a different way than of them all?

Had he blindly fallen into the trap which an accomplished coquette set for him, which from the beginning of their acquaintance he had scented and fully understood, and being circumvented by her maneuvers, was he going to submit to a fascination which the women who are determined to attract the opposite sex, possess?

He walked nervously backwards and forwards in his apartment, then for a while he tried to sit down quietly, he lit a cigarette but threw it away as soon as it was alight; every moment he looked at the clock

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whose hand was going towards the hour in a slow and immutable manner. Several times he had felt inclined to throw off the arched glass case with a quick jerk of his nail, and push the two golden needles that pointed to the hour which he was awaiting so impatiently, roughly forward. It seemed to his fevered imagination that that would be quite sufficient for the door to open and for her to appear on the threshold before him — deceived and forced to come to him by his cunning ruse. Then he smiled to think how absurdly childish and unreasonable he had become.

Then for the first time he asked himself plainly the question: "Could I ever become her lover?" The idea appeared to him singular, not possible to be realized, scarcely possible to pursue, on account of the complications which would then be brought into her life; and yet she attracted him so much! "Decidedly, I am in a strange fix," he concluded as the clock struck the hour which made him tremble and disturbed his senses more than his soul. He awaited her with an impatience that increased every minute; she was always so punctual, why was she late to-day? When ten minutes more had passed he was tormented by a feeling of keen pain, and then annoyed to think that she was making him waste his time; then he looked the situation in the face and knew that he was going to suffer, and suffer cruelly. What should he do? Should he wait for her? No! He would go out, so that if by chance she arrived very late she would find the studio empty. He would go out, but when? What latitude should he leave her? Would it not be better for him to stay in the studio, and give her to understand by a few

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carefully chosen, cold but polite words, that he did not wish to be kept waiting by his sitters. And suppose she did not come! Perhaps he would receive a telegram, a letter, or a servant or special messenger would bring him word. If she did not come, what should he do? It was a day wasted. He could not work now. So he would . . . Yes! he would go and call upon her, he wanted so much to see her. It was true, he *needed* her, it was such a deep, oppressive, tormenting need. What did it mean! love? But he did not feel an exaltation in the thought, nor passion in his veins, nor rêverie of the soul, in considering the fact that he was going to suffer greatly.

Suddenly, a pealing of the bell rang through the silent house, which made the artist's breath come in quick gasps, then a flood of joy swept over him as he went forward to meet her.

She came in. She was alone.

Immediately he felt strangely bold and daring. "Do you know what I have been asking myself all this while I have waited for you?" he said.

"Why no. How could I possibly know," she replied smiling.

"I have been asking myself if I am not in love with you."

"In love with me," she exclaimed, "that is too absurd. I think you really must be going mad," but she smiled and her eyes said: "Now I think that is very nice, and I am *so* happy." She continued: "But really you ought not to be so frivolous, why do you joke on the subject?"

"On the contrary, I am very serious," he replied,

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"I assure you I am far from joking. I do not say that I am in love with you, but I am on a fair way to become so."

"What makes you think so?" she persisted.

"My emotions when you are not present and my happiness when you are here," he answered.

She laughed outright as she seated herself on the sofa.

"Oh! You need not worry over such symptoms," she said, "the moment that you sleep well, and have a good appetite for your dinner you are not in any particular danger, I assure you."

He laughed.

"And if I cannot sleep, and I lose my appetite," he said, "What then?"

"Acquaint me with the fact at once," she replied.

"And what then?"

"I would stay away and leave you to get cured in peace."

"Thanks! how very kind you are," he said dryly.

And on the subject of this love they chatted all the afternoon. It was the same the following days. She accepted it as an amusing joke — of no importance. She questioned him gayly as she entered.

"And how is love to-day?"

And he told her in a tone half serious, half light, the progress his affection had made, all the intimate workings of the tenderness which was born and which was growing in him. He analyzed minutely his sentiments to her hour by hour, since their parting of the day before, as though he was a professor who was discoursing on an interesting problem to his class. And she listened to him interested and slightly moved and

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stirred by the story, which seemed that of a book of which she was the heroine. When he had enumerated in a witty and droll manner all the symptoms of which he had become the prey, his voice would suddenly tremble in expressing by a word or by an intonation of the voice, the real suffering of his heart. And always she questioned him, vibrating with curiosity, her eyes fixed upon him, her ears eagerly drinking in the words that were so wrong to approve of, but so charming to hear. Sometimes when he came close to her to arrange the pose more to his satisfaction, he would take her hand and try to kiss it. With a quick movement she would draw it away from his lips saying coldly:

"Please continue your painting."

He would take up his palette and brush again, but before five minutes had passed, she would ask him a question that would bring him back quickly to the subject that occupied them both. She now began to feel in her heart a certain fear. She wanted to be loved, but not too much. Sure of herself, and of not being won by him, she dreaded to let the adventure go too far. Suppose she were to lose him altogether; if, after she had appeared to encourage him so much, he was forced to see the hopelessness of it all? If however she was obliged to give up this sweet friendship, this lover-like talk, which flowed on, rolling out portions of love, like a river with sandy beds of gold,—she would feel an intense grief, it would leave a deep scar as though her heart had been torn.

When she left her home to go to the studio a wave of deep joy rushed warmly through her veins, which left her superbly happy and gay. As she put up her hand to ring the doorbell of his home, her heart

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bounded with impatience, and the carpet on the stairs was scarcely touched as her feet flew over it.

Nevertheless Bertin became gloomy, more nervous, and often irritable.

One day when she came in, he sat down by her side instead of commencing his work and said to her very gravely:

"Madame, you can no longer ignore that it is not a joking matter with me, but that I love you madly."

Thoroughly alarmed by his words and feeling that the dreaded crisis was at hand, she tried to stop him from saying more, but he would not heed her. His heart was overflowing with emotion, and she was forced to listen to him, as she stood there, pale, trembling and uneasy. He talked for a long time, but never once asked for her love, he spoke with tenderness and a sad and hopeless resignation. He gently took her hand in his, and she let it lay in his warm clasp. Before she could stop him he had dropped on his knees beside her, and prayed her in tones of anguish not to do him more harm. Harm! What harm? She scarcely understood, she did not wish to understand, she felt numbed by a cruel grief to see him suffer so. Had she really *harmed* him? Suddenly she saw the tears spring to his eyes. She caught her breath sharply and cried out. She tried to comfort him as she would comfort a child who was hurt.

"Stop! Stop dear," he said, in a voice scarcely audible, "I am suffering too much."

At the sight of his agony, of the tears which he manfully strove to hide, her nerves gave way, her arms trembled in readiness to open to him. When she felt herself folded tightly in his arms, and felt his warm,

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She felt herself folded tightly in his arms.

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passionate kisses upon her lips, she wanted to cry out, to struggle, to push him from her, but she knew she was lost, was she not consenting even when trying to resist, giving herself, while struggling, for she was clasping him tightly all the while although crying out: "No! No! I cannot! I cannot." . . .

After, she remained for a moment dazed, hiding her burning face in her hands, then she sprang to her feet, snatched her hat from the carpet where it had fallen, stuck the pins roughly through her hair and fled from the room, without heeding the artist's entreaties to remain. When she reached the street, she stood weak and trembling on the side walk, her breath coming in short gasps, her knees shook, she wanted to sit down on the curb-stone and rest. A cab was passing, she made a sign to the driver who pulled up beside her.

"Go very slowly, and drive me anywhere," she said to the man as he opened the door for her.

She stumbled into the cab, closed both the windows, and then flung herself down in the corner. She felt alone behind the closed glass — alone to think. She remained stunned,— she looked at the houses, the people walking by, the cabs, the omnibuses, with empty eyes that saw nothing. She thought of nothing — it was as though she were allowing herself a respite, before daring to reflect upon what had passed. Then as she had a quick mind, and was by no means weak spirited, she looked the situation in the face.

"I am ruined," she said slowly.

She remained bewildered under the certitude of an irreparable misfortune, dismayed as a man is, who has fallen from a height, and who dares not move, know-

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ing that his limbs are broken but dreading to verify the fact. Then, instead of being maddened by the pain which she was awaiting and dreading, she remained peaceful and calm as she came out of the catastrophe, her heart beat gently after this fall which had depressed her soul, and no longer seemed to take part in the bewilderment of her thoughts. She repeated aloud as if to convince herself: "I am ruined; I am no longer a good woman." There was no echo of suffering in her heart to this plaint of the conscience. She let herself be gently swayed as the cab rattled on over the stony streets, putting off the reasoning she would have to make later on this cruel situation. She was afraid to think, that was all, afraid to understand and reflect. But she was not going to suffer! On the contrary, it seemed to her as though she felt in that obscure and impenetrable being created in us by the incessant struggle of our inclinations — an unnatural quietude.

After half an hour of this strange repose, understanding that the despair she expected would not come, she shook herself out of the torpor, murmuring:

"It seems so strange that I have no regrets." Then she began to reproach herself. An anger rose up against herself for her blindness and her weakness: Why had she not foreseen it? Why had she not known that the hour of reckoning would surely come, that this man pleased her enough to make her a coward, and that in the most moral hearts, desire sometimes comes like a whirlwind and sweeps away all resistance. When she had severely reprimanded and despised herself she wondered with a sort of dismay what would happen next.

Her first thought was to break off all intercourse

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with the painter, and never see him again, but scarcely had she formed this resolution than a thousand reasons came at once to combat it. How should she explain the situation? What would she say to her husband; if the truth was suspected would she not be whispered about, then would it not be spread abroad everywhere? It would be far better so as to save appearances to play *vis-à-vis* of Olivier Bertin a hypocritical comedy of indifference and forgetfulness, and to show him that she had already wiped out that moment from her memory, and from her life. Would she be able to do it? Did she have the courage to appear as though she had forgotten everything, to look at him in astonished indignation and say:

"I don't understand you, I really do not know what you expect of me," to say that to the man with whom she had shared that swift and powerful emotion.

She thought for a long time, and finally decided that it was the only thing to do, no other solution appeared possible. She would go to him the next day with her courage in both hands and give him to clearly understand what her wishes were, and what she expected of him: there must not be the slightest word, or allusion, or even look that could recall that moment of shame. After they had suffered, for she knew he would suffer also, he would surely take her part, and see that it was the only way she could act, he was a loyal and true man, and he would live in the future what he had been up till now.

As soon as she had decided on the course she intended to pursue, she gave the cab driver her address and told him to drive her home. When she entered her home she was seized with a profound prostration

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and a desire to be alone — to see no one, to sleep and forget.

Locking herself in her room, she remained on her couch until dinner time. She went down stairs punctually at the hour, and was surprised to feel so calm and to be able to meet her husband with her usual composure. He came into the room carrying their little girl in his arms. She shook hands and greeted him without any feeling of remorse.

M. de Guilleroy asked her what she had been doing all the afternoon. She replied with indifference that she had been posing at the studio, as usual.

" Is the likeness good? " he asked.

" It is getting very good."

He talked of his business affairs, which he liked to relate while eating; of the sitting at the Chamber; and the discussion of the project of law on the adulteration of the commodities.

His prattling she usually supported, but to-night it annoyed her, and she looked with greater attention at the ordinary, tedious man who was interested in such things; but she smiled pleasantly while she listened, and was even more gracious than usual. She was thinking all the time that she sat opposite him: " I have deceived him! He is my lawful husband, and I have deceived him! Nothing can alter what has happened, nothing can wipe it out. I consented during a few brief moments to lie in the arms of another man, to receive another man's kisses. I am no longer a good woman. A few seconds in my life, that I can never blot out, have brought to me this irretrievable act, so serious, so short, but the most shameful sin for a woman to commit . . . and I do not feel any despair.

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. . . How strange! If any one had told me yesterday that I could have felt like this, I should not have believed it; I should have thought at once of the fearful remorse . . . and I have none . . . hardly any."

M. de Guilleroy went out after dinner as he was in the habit of doing every evening. Then she drew her little girl on to her knees and cried softly as she kissed her. Her tears were sincere, they were conscience tears, but not heart tears.

That night she scarcely slept; in the darkness of her room, she thought of the dangers which she would run in regard to the artist, she dreaded the meeting on the morrow, and all she would have to pretend, while looking into his eyes. All the morning she lay prostrated on her couch: she tried to argue with herself that she had nothing to fear, she thought of what he might say, and what she would have to reply; she must be ready for all. She started to the studio earlier than usual so as to be able to walk slowly and to collect her thoughts while walking.

He scarcely expected to see her; all day he had asked himself what he ought to do. After her flight, which he had been afraid to stop, he had remained standing there listening to her flying footsteps, and the frantic struggle she had with the latch of the door in her nervous agitation. He heard the slamming of the door, and he stood there in the room alone feeling a deep, fierce joy. He had possessed her, *her*. It was over. Could it be possible? After the surprise of his triumph, he thought of the delight he had felt at taking her, and laid down again on the couch where he had possessed her to bring back the sweet memory.

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He lay there a long time full of the delirious thought that she was his mistress, and that between them,— between him and the woman whom he had so much desired, in a few moments there was knotted the mysterious tie which secretly binds two beings one to the other. He still felt through all his trembling body the acute recollection of the quick moments when their lips had met and their bodies united, quivering together in the great passion of life.

He did not go out that evening, and so as to be able to dwell more on the thought of the happiness that had come to him, he went to bed early, vibrating with emotion.

As soon as he awoke the next morning he asked himself what he ought to do, had she been a *cocotte* or an actress, he would have sent her some flowers, or possibly some jewels, but this was quite another sort of affair and he was decidedly perplexed. There was one thing he must do: he must write to her . . . but what? He commenced, scribbled and tore up at least twenty letters, they seemed to him in this particular case to be offensive, odious, and ridiculous. He wanted to express to her in a refined and delicate manner, in an outburst of tenderness, his gratitude, and his offers of everlasting devotion, but all he could say were the usual commonplace phrases, expressions, that with her would be too coarse and foolish. So he gave up the idea of writing, and decided to call and see her instead; he would go as soon as the hour for the sitting had passed, he did not think for one moment that she would come.

He closed himself up in his studio, and stood before her portrait, his lips twitching with a mad desire to press

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themselves on the canvas where something of hers was fixed. From time to time he would walk from the picture to the window and look up and down the street; every woman he saw coming along made his heart beat quickly: twenty times he thought he recognized her, and when the woman he had seen had come and gone, he sat down in his chair, angry and depressed as though he had been deceived. Suddenly he saw her! No! he doubted, took his field-glasses, recognized her, and overcome by a violent emotion sat down to await her. When she came in, he went forward joyfully to meet her and grasped her hands, but she pulled them away brusquely, and as he knelt at her feet, overcome with anguish, and eyes raised to hers entreatingly, she said coldly:

"What *are* you doing? I don't understand this attitude."

"Oh! Madame. I beg of you" . . . he stammered.

"Get up! You are simply ridiculous, this is too absurd," she said severely.

He stood up and looked at her wildly.

"What has happened? tell me. Do not treat me like this. I love you" . . . he murmured.

Then in a few quick, cold words she expressed to him her wishes, and signified clearly that the affair must end.

"I really cannot see what you can have to say to me," she added, "there is one thing I must ask you, that is never to speak of your love to me; if you do, I shall leave the studio at once and not return. If for one moment — one moment only — you forget this condition, you will never see me again."

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"Madame, if it is your wish, I will obey you," he said quietly.

"That is right," she said, "I knew you would do as I ask you. I am not mistaken in you. Now continue your work, it seems to me you are very long finishing the portrait."

He took up his palette and began to paint, but his hand trembled so he could hardly hold the brush, his eyes were dim, he could scarcely see the blurred canvas before him: he felt his heart was bruised and he wanted to cry out in his pain. He tried to speak to her, but she answered him coldly; he looked up from the picture and paid a pretty compliment to her exquisite coloring, but she stopped him in so sharp a tone, that suddenly he felt one of those lover's furies, which turn love into hatred. He felt a strong nervous upheaval throughout his body and soul, and at once, without transition, he detested her. So after all, she was like the other women. Why not? Why should she be different. She was false, fickle, and weak like them all; she had attracted and beguiled him by the tricks of a *cocotte,* she had fanned the flames of his passion and made him care for her, with no thought of being anything to him after, challenging him, then refusing him, employing all the wiles of the shameful women who seem always ready to give themselves so long as the men, whom they render like unto the dogs of the street, are not panting with desire.

Taut pis pour elle, it was worse for her, so it served her right. He had had her, *voilà!* She could be as haughty as she liked, and talk to him insolently, but she could not efface her shame, and he was a man, he would forget it. Really, he would have done a fool-

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ish thing to have taken a mistress, who would have eaten up his artist's life with the capricious teeth of a pretty woman.

He felt like whistling, just the same as he did before his models, but as he felt his annoyance increase, he was afraid he might say something rude, that he would regret after, so he shortened the sitting under pretext of an appointment. When they wished each other a formal good-bye, it seemed to both that they were farther apart than on the day when they had first met at the Duchess de Mortemain's.

As soon as she had gone, he put on his hat and coat and went out. It was cold. In the dull sky the winter sun struggled behind a hazy mist, throwing on the city a pale grayish light, which seemed a little false and sad.

He walked for a long time with quick impatient step: he went straight ahead pushing aside the people who came in his way, then little by little his anger against her diminished in disconsolation and regrets. After he had repeated all the reproaches he had made, he noticed the women as they drove by and compared them with her. How much prettier she was than they. Like many others who do not know it, he had been waiting for the impossible encounter, that unique, rare affection — poetic and passionate, which our dreams chisel on our hearts. Had he not found it? Was she not the one who could have given him this almost impossible happiness? Why do our dreams never realize? Why can we never grasp that which we are pursuing? Why do we only get small portions which make this chase after deception more sorrowful? It was not from her, he wanted more, but from life itself. Now that he was able to reason calmly, he

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asked himself: "What did he wish? After all, why should he reproach her? Because she had been kind and good to him? Did she not have far greater cause to reproach him? His conduct had been that of a cad!"

He returned sadly to his studio. He felt now that he would like to ask her pardon, and do all he could, to make her forget. He wondered what he could do, to make her understand that until death he would be obedient to all her wishes.

The next day when she came, she brought her little girl with her; her smile was so mournful, her look so sad, and the painter saw in her big blue eyes which had always been so gay with laughter, all the trouble, the remorse, and the desolation that the heart of a woman can suffer. He was moved with pity. He tried to make her forget, and showed the most delicate reserve in anticipating her every wish. She acknowledged his kindnesses with sweet gratitude, but with the weary and bruised attitude of a woman who suffered.

Seeing her thus, he was seized again with the mad wish to love her, and be loved by her. He began to ask himself how was it she was not more angry with him, why did she come back again, and listen and reply to him, when so much had passed between them. If she could see him, and hear his voice, and tolerate, when with him, the thought that could not leave her, it could only be that the thought had not become odious. When a woman hates a man who has wronged her, she can not meet him without showing her hatred, he can not remain indifferent to her, that is impossible, she will either detest or pardon him. And if she can forgive the wrong, she is not far from loving him. As

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he slowly mixed his paints he reasoned thus with arguments precise, clear and sure. It was all clear now, he understood, he was master of the situation and able to cope with all emergencies.

He would have to remain patient, be prudent and devoted, and then some day he would have her again. He knew how to wait. To reassure her, and conquer her again, he in his turn would resort to ruses. He concealed his tenderness under apparent remorse, under hesitating attentions and indifferent attitudes. Serene in the certitude of a near happiness, which would come to him sooner or later, he even felt a sort of odd, keen pleasure in not hurrying it. He could wait, for he knew she would some day be his.

"She is afraid," he said, as he saw her bring her little girl with her every time.

He felt, as she looked at him with constrained and embarrassed eyes, that the slow work was steadily progressing, that they were getting nearer and closer to each other. Hers was the call of a soul that is struggling and of a wish that is weakening and which seemed to cry out "Force me." "Force me."

After a while, being reassured by his manner, she came alone, and he treated her as a friend; he spoke to her of his life, his projects, his art, just as a comrade or a brother would. Beguiled by his unconstrained manner she accepted joyfully the rôle of adviser, she was flattered that he distinguished her thus from other women, and she felt that her mind and talents would acquire a greater delicacy from this intellectual intimacy. By dint of consulting and showing deference to her, she passed naturally from the duties of adviser to the priesthood of inspirator. She was delighted to feel

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what an influence she had over this great man,— she came nearer to being what he loved as an artist, since she inspired his work.

And so it happened one evening after a long talk on celebrated painters and their mistresses, he bent towards her, and she let herself be folded in his arms. This time she stayed there without trying to fly from him and gave him back the warm kisses he gave her. Then she had no more regrets, but she felt a vague sentiment of having fallen, and to reply to the reproaches of her reason, she believed in a judgment.

Drawn to him by her heart that was purely virginal, and by her soul which was empty, her body was conquered by the slow dominion of the caresses. She became attached to him little by little, as only a tender, clinging woman could, who for the first time in her life knows what love is.

With him it was different; his was a storm of fierce love,— sensual and poetic.

The portrait was finished, and it was without doubt the best he had ever painted, for he had found and fixed that inexpressible *something* which a painter rarely discovers — the reflex, the mystery, the physiognomy of the soul which passes imperceptibly across the face.

The months went by, then the years, but they scarcely loosened the tie which united the Countess de Guilleroy and the artist Olivier Bertin. With him it was no longer the exaltation, as at the beginning of their *liaison*, but a calm, deep affection — a loving friendship.

With Madame de Guilleroy it was different, her passionate attachment for the artist increased, it was the firm attachment that certain women have, who lov-

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ing once, love always. Honest and true in their adultery, as they would have been in their marriages — had they been marriages of love, they dedicate themselves to a unique tenderness from which nothing can turn them. Not only do they love their lovers, but they want to love them, their hearts are so full of thoughts of them that nothing else can enter. They have bound their lives with resolve, just as one binds the hands before jumping into deep water, when one can swim, but wants to be drowned.

From the moment that the Countess had given herself to the artist, she was assailed with fears for his constancy; nothing held him but his desire, his sentiment, his fancy for a woman he had met one day, as he had met so many others before.

She felt that he was so free and easily tempted; he lived without duties, ties, or scruples like all men. He was handsome, celebrated, and distinguished, and had within reach of his desires — desires so easily moved — the worldly women whose modesty is so fragile, and the women of the alcove and the theaters who lavish their favors on men such as he.

She lived constantly in the fear of losing him, watching his behavior and his attitude, disturbed by a word, full of anguish when he admired another woman, praising the charm of her face or the grace of her style. She trembled at the thought of what she did not know in his life, and all that she did know frightened and saddened her. Every time they met she ingeniously questioned him without his being aware of it, she asked him his opinion on people that he had seen in the houses where he had dined, on the slightest impressions he

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received. As soon as she thought she divined the possible influence of someone, she fought against it with marvelous guile, with innumerable resources.

Often she had a foreboding of a short intrigue, not deeply rooted — an intrigue which lasted a week or two weeks, the affairs that come from time to time in the life of every artist. She had what one might call the intuition of danger, before she was even warned of the awakening of a new desire within Olivier, by the air of fête which the eyes and the expression of a man takes who is pursuing a *gallant fantasy* with excessive excitement.

And so she commenced to suffer. Her sleep was disturbed by these tortures of doubt. To confirm her fears she would go to the studio without making an appointment with him, and ask him questions which seemed naive, listen to his words and examine his heart as one examines and feels and listens to find out the harm hidden in the body. And when she was alone the tears would come, she was so sure they would take him from her this time, they would steal from her this love to which she clung with such strength, because she had put into it all her will, all her strength of affection, all her hopes, and all her dreams. Then when she knew he had returned to her after these quick estrangements she felt, in taking him back, in possessing him again,— like something lost and then refound — a silent and deep happiness, which sometimes, when she passed before a church would make her enter the sacred doors and kneel down to thank God.

The ever present wish to please him above all others and to keep him against all, had made of her entire life an interrupted fight of coquetterie. She struggled for

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him without ceasing. She fought against the decline of her beauty and grace, so that wherever he went he would hear her spoken of in terms of admiration, he would hear them praise her looks, her style and her exquisite gowns. She bewitched and pleased other men, but only for him, so that he would be proud and jealous of her; and each time when she knew he was jealous, after having made him suffer a little, then she would let him triumph over them all, and so revived his love in exciting his vanity. And knowing full well that a man can always meet a woman whose physical seductions, being a novelty, would be more powerful, she had resource to other means, she flattered and spoilt him. In a cautious, but never ceasing manner, she let the praises flow upon him, she rocked him in admiration, and wrapped him in compliments, so he was forced to see, when with other women, that their friendship, and even their tenderness was cold and incomplete, and that no one could compare with her.

She made of her house — of her drawing-rooms to which he came so often — a place where his pride as an artist would be attracted, as much as his heart of a man, she made it the spot in Paris where he liked best to come, because all his egotistical inclinations could be gratified. Not only did she learn all his tastes so that in satiating them, she gave him an impression of well-being which nothing could replace, but she knew how to awaken new tastes and would create *gourmandises* of sorts, both material and sentimental, habits of little thoughtful attentions, of affection, of flattery. She sought to captivate his eyes by elegance, his sense of smell by the most delicate perfumes, his ears by compliments and his palate by the choicest food. When

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she had done so much for his body and soul, feasting a multitude of small tyrannical wants, when she was quite sure that no other friend would give him the care and look after his needs as she did, she commenced to have worse fears. All this loving care made him speak with disgust of his own home, and complain of living alone, and of not being able to call and see her, except with all the reserve imposed by society — he would go to the club or elsewhere to find the means to lessen his loneliness, and so she had the fear that he might marry. Sometimes she suffered so much with this dread that she would have welcomed old age to end the agony, and to rest in a chilled and calm affection.

The years passed without severing the tie; the chain which she had made was strong, and as the links began to show signs of wear, she remade them, but always anxiously watching the painter's heart, as one would watch a child crossing a dangerous street, and each day she dreaded more the unknown fatality, whose menace hangs over us.

The Count, without suspicion or jealousy, found this intimacy between his wife and the famous artist — who was received everywhere with great respect — perfectly natural, and in the course of time the two men meeting so frequently, finished by having a strong regard and liking for each other.

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CHAPTER II

WHEN Bertin arrived at his friend's home on the Friday evening that she was giving a dinner to celebrate her daughter's return, he found M. de Musadieu, who was sitting in the little Louis XV *salon,* the only arrival.

Musadieu was an elderly man of wit who might perhaps have become a man of worth, but he had now reached the age when one ceases to worry over "what might have been." As an old preserver of the Imperial museums he had found the means to be renominated Inspector of the Beaux-Arts under the Republic; this did not prevent him from being above all, the friend of all the princes and princesses of the European aristocracy, and the sworn patron of artists of all kinds. He was endowed with a keen intelligence, a rare foresight, and a gift of speech which enabled him to express the most difficult things in the most tactful manner — a quickness of thought which placed him at ease in any society, and a shrewd diplomatic scent, which enabled him to form at once a correct opinion on the character of a man. All day long he went from one smart *salon* to another, brilliant, amusing, and useless. Capable of doing most things, he spoke on all subjects with a pretended competency,— he had a bright manner of diffusing his knowledge which made him a great favorite with the society women to whom he rendered the services of a rolling bazaar of erudition. As a matter of fact, he did know a great deal, although many of the standard works he had not even read, but he was at his best with the various academies, the scholars, authors, and learned specialists to whom he had

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listened with great discernment. Any explanations in regard to the relative subjects, that were too technical or superfluous, he was able to forget at once, and kept only in mind the absolute facts; his acquirement thus gleaned, made him as clearly understood as a scientific fable. He gave one the impression of an emporium of ideas, one of those great stores, where one can never find any rare object, but where all other goods are to be found in abundance — articles of all sorts and makes, from kitchen utensils to cheap instruments of domestic surgery.

The artists with whom his official duties brought him in contact, liked and feared him. He was able to do them great service, he found customers for their pictures and gave them introductions to influential people, he liked to introduce them, patronize and launch them. He seemed to devote himself in a mysterious manner to the work of uniting the artist with the world. He gloried in being known intimately by *these* and to enter familiarly into the homes of *those* and to lunch with the Prince of Wales when he visited Paris, and then dine the same evening with Paul Adelmans, Olivier Bertin and Amaury Maldant.

Bertin liked him well enough, he found him diverting — as he remarked he was "the encyclopedia of Jules Verne, with the skin of an ass for a binding."

When Bertin entered the *salon* he came forward and shook hands and began at once to speak of the political situation; there were rumors of war which Musadieu thought rather alarming for obvious reasons which he exposed very strongly — Germany having all interest to crush France, and to hasten this moment which had been waited for so long by Bismark; while

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Olivier Bertin proved by irrefutable arguments that these fears were chimerical. Germany would not be so foolish as to compromise her victory in an adventure so doubtful, neither would the Chancellor be so imprudent as to risk at the last days of his life, in a single venture, his work and glory of a lifetime. However, Musadieu seemed to know something that he did not wish to mention, besides it was only that very day that he had talked with one of the ministers, and had met the Grand Duke Vladimir, on his way from Cannes, only the evening before. The artist argued and with calm irony disputed the competency of the best informed people. Why! at the back of all these rumors they were preparing great movements on the stock exchange!

M. de Guilleroy came into the room and shook hands with effusion, excusing himself by a few polite phrases for having let them remain alone.

"And you, my dear deputy" said the artist, "what do you think of these rumors?"

M. de Guilleroy started a speech. Oh! yes, he knew more than most people, being a member of the Chamber, but, at the same time, he did not hold the opinion of the majority of his colleagues. No! he did not think there was any probability of a near conflict unless it was provoked by the French turbulence and by the disturbance of the so-called patriots of the league. He spoke of M. de Bismark in the highest terms, he made a portrait of him à la Saint-Simon. The people would not try to understand that man, for they always attributed to him their own manner of thinking. M. Bismark was not a false and lying diplomat, but a frank, honest man who always cried out the truth,

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announcing his intentions. "I want peace" he cried, and it was true, he wanted peace and nothing but peace, and everything had proved it for the last eighteen years,— *everything* — even to his accoutrements, to his alliances, to the mass of people united against our impetuosity. M. de Guilleroy concluded by saying in a decided tone — a tone that admitted of no argument:

"Gentlemen, he is a great man who desires peace above all, but who believes only in threats and violent means to obtain it."

"The means to the end," quoted Musadieu.

"I will agree with you," he continued, smiling, "that he wants peace, if you will agree with me, that he wants to fight in order to obtain it. It is always so, it is an indisputable and phenomenal truth that we only have war so as to get peace."

At this moment the butler threw open the paneled doors and announced:

"The Duchess de Mortemain."

The Duchess was a tall, fine woman. She swept into the room with an air of authority. Guilleroy rose quickly to meet her, and bending over her hand, he kissed her fingers.

"How do you do, my dear Duchess!" he said. The two other men greeted her with a certain distinguished familiarity, for the Duchess had a cordial and brusque manner.

Widow of the General Duke de Mortemain, mother of an only child who was married to the Prince de Salia, daughter of the Marquis de Farandal, of high birth and royally rich, she received in her home, on the rue de Varenne, all the celebrities of the entire world. No Royal Highness passed through Paris

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without dining at her table, and no man could speak of an august personage without her wanting to know him at once. She must see him, talk to him, judge him. It amused her greatly and brought excitement into her life, feeding the flame of haughty, but friendly curiosity which burnt within her. She was scarcely seated when the butler again flung open the double doors and announced:

"The Baron and Baroness de Corbelle."

The new arrivals were both young,— the baron clean shaven and stout, the baroness, slim, elegant, and very dark. The couple held a unique position in the French aristocracy, due mainly to the scrupulous choice of their acquaintances. Of small nobility of no importance they were moved in all their acts by an immoderate love of what is select, distinguished, and correct. By dint of frequenting the richest houses, by showing their patriotism as royalists, being pious, correct in the greatest degree, because they respected all that should be respected, and despised all that should be despised, and never made a breach on any worldly dogma, never hesitated in regard to a detail in etiquette, they were able to pass before the eyes of the majority for the flower of high-life. Their opinion was a sort of code of what should be and their presence in a house constituted for it a genuine title of honorability.

The Corbelles were related to the Count de Guilleroy.

"Well," said the Duchess at last, "I should very much like to know where your wife is, Guilleroy."

"Just a moment, Duchess, there is to be a surprise," said the Count, "she will be here soon."

When Madame de Guilleroy made her entrée in the social world after she had been married to the Count

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only a month, she was presented to the Duchess de Mortmain, who at once loved her, adopted her, and became her chaperon. For twenty years this friendship had lasted and when the Duchess called her "my child" one could still hear in her voice the emotion of this sudden and persistent infatuation. It was at her home that the artist and the Countess had met for the first time.

"Have you been to see the Exhibition of the Intemperants, Madame la Duchesse?" asked Musadieu.

"No! What's that?" she asked brusquely.

"Merely a group of new artists, who are impressionists to the state of inebriety; there are two who are very good."

"I do not like the jokes of these men," said the *grande dame* haughtily.

A woman of authority, brusque, scarcely admitting other opinions than her own, and establishing hers solely on the consciousness of her social position, she considered, without knowing them, that artists and scholars were so many mercenary, intelligent beings who had been sent by God to amuse the nobility, or to render them services. She gave no other basis for her judgment, than the degree of astonishment and of irrational pleasure that the view of something procured her, the reading of a book or the narration of a discovery.

Tall, stout, florid, with a loud voice, she passed for having *un grand air* because nothing troubled her, she was not afraid to say anything, and she patronized the whole world — the dethroned princes by her receptions in their honor, and even the Almighty by her liberality to the clergy, and her donations to the churches.

Musadieu turned to her again and said: "Have

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you heard that they believe that they have arrested Marie Lambourg's assassin?"

Her interest was aroused at once.

"No! Tell me all about it," she said eagerly.

He told her all the details.

Musadieu was tall, very thin, and wore a white waistcoat with diamond studs. He talked without gesticulating with his hands, and with such a correct air that it permitted him to say risky things in a manner that was his specialty. He was very short-sighted, and seemed, in spite of his eyeglass, never to see anyone. When he sat down it seemed as though all the bones of his body bent to the shape of his chair. His torso when curved became quite small, collapsed as if the vertebral column was made of rubber; his legs crossed one over the other looked like two rolls of ribbon, and his long arms extending out on the sides of the chair, let his white hands with their thin fingers hang down limply. His hair and his mustache artistically dyed with the white strands carefully covered, was a subject for many jokes.

As he was explaining to the Duchess that the jewels belonging to the murdered street-walker had been given as a present, it was presumed, by the murderer to another woman of light habits, the door of the large salon again opened widely, and two blonde women in white lace gowns — blonde in billows of cream maline, resembling each other as two sisters of different ages, the one a little too mature, the other a little too young, the one just a shade too stout, the other a shade too thin, came into the room, smiling, with their arms around each other's waists.

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Everyone cried out joyfully and clapped their hands. Olivier Bertin was the only one who knew that Annette de Guilleroy had returned, and the appearance of the young girl beside her mother was a great surprise. Madame de Guilleroy at a distance looked quite as young and much prettier than her daughter, for although she was a flower just a little too full blown, she was still very beautiful, while the young girl just blossoming into womanhood was only beginning to be pretty.

The Duchess was delighted and clapped her hands, exclaiming:

"*Mon Dieu,* are they not ravishing, side by side! Look, M. de Musadieu, they are just alike."

Two opinions were formed at once. According to Musadieu, the Corbelles and Count de Guilleroy, they were only alike in complexion, hair, and eyes; these were exact, they were equally specked with black points which looked like small spots of ink fallen on a blue iris, but apart from these features they declared that when Annette would have become a woman, there would scarcely be any resemblance. But according to the duchess and Olivier Bertin, they were alike in every respect. It was merely their ages which made them appear different.

"Hasn't she altered in these three years," said the artist. "I should not have known her. I shall be afraid to speak to her familiarly. How can I say 'thou' to her now?"

The Countess laughed.

"Why! I never heard of such a thing. It would be very funny indeed if you were to *tutoyer* Annette."

Annette gave him a timid look but behind her look

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there was seen the gleam of her future mischievousness.

"It is I who will be afraid to say '*tu*' to M. Bertin," she said, looking at him with a half smile.

"You may both keep to this bad habit, I will permit it," said Madame de Guilleroy, "you will soon get acquainted again."

But Annette shook her head. "No! I could not, mamma, it would embarrass me."

The Duchess, after kissing the girl, looked at her attentively.

"There, little one," she said, "stand before me, and look straight at me. Yes, you are the image of your mother, you will be very pretty in a few years' time, when you have taken on a little brilliancy. And you must get fatter, not much, but just a little. You are skinny now."

"Oh, don't say that," cried the Countess.

"And why not?"

"It is so nice to be slim, I am doing all I can to get thinner."

At this Madame de Mortemain became angry, forgetting in her excitement that she was speaking before a young girl.

"There it is again, we are always in the fashion for bones, I suppose because one can dress them better than flesh. This is the generation of thin women. It makes me think of the cows of Egypt; I do not understand in the least how men can pretend to admire your carcasses. In my time they wanted better than that."

Everyone smiled; turning to Annette she added:

"Look at your mother, child, she is perfect in every way, grow like her."

Dinner was served, so they passed on into the dining-

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room; when they were seated Musadieu recommenced the discussion.

"I think that men should be thin," he said, "because they are made for exercises which require address and agility, which are incompatible with a stomach. The case with women is different, however. Don't you think so, Corbelle?"

Corbelle looked confused. The Duchess was extremely stout, and his own wife more than thin, but the Baroness came to his help by pronouncing decidedly in favor of slimness. The year before she had wrestled fearfully with the commencement of *embonpoint,* but she had mastered it very quickly. "What did you do?" asked Madame de Guilleroy eagerly.

And the Baroness explained the method used by all the smart slim women of the day. One must not drink when eating, in fact not until an hour after the meal, then a cup of tea is permitted, but it must be very hot,—*almost boiling.* That is successful with everybody. She cited some astonishing examples of exceptionally fat women, who had followed this régime and in three months had become thinner than the blade of a knife.

The Duchess was exasperated.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed. "What fools women are to torture themselves like that. You enjoy nothing — absolutely nothing, not even champagne. Now then Bertin, you are an artist, what is your opinion?"

"Madame! I am a painter, I drape, so it does not much matter to me. If I were a sculptor I might complain."

"But you are a man, frankly, which do you prefer?"

"I . . . . Well . . . . An elegance rather

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well nourished, what my cook calls — a plump little corn-fed chicken, not too fat, but fine and plump."

Everyone laughed at the comparison, but the Countess remained incredulous.

"No! It is nice to be slim," she murmured, looking at her daughter. "Women who remain slim never look old."

On that point there was another discussion; however, everyone was of the same opinion in one respect; they all agreed that it was bad for a very fat woman to get very thin too quickly.

These observations gave rise to a review of society women, and of more debates on their grace, style, and beauty. Musadieu thought the blonde Marquise de Lochrist incomparably lovely, while Bertin declared that Madame Mandelière was without rival. She was a brunette with low forehead, dark, melancholy looking eyes, and a rather large mouth with gleaming teeth.

He was sitting next to Annette and turning to her he said:

"Listen carefully, Nanette, to all that we are saying now; you will hear it repeated at least once a week, up to the time when you are an old woman. In eight days you will know by heart what everybody thinks on politics, women, theaters, and the rest. When you have heard us all expose and defend our opinions, you can choose your own peacefully, amidst those that one ought to have, and then you need never trouble to think, you can rest."

Without replying she gave him a roguish look, her eyes sparkled with a bright young intelligence which was held in a leash, but quite ready to start. The Duchess and Musadieu played with their ideas as they

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would a game of ball, throwing them at each other without noticing that they were throwing always the same; they were protesting in the name of thought and of human action.

Then Bertin attempted to show how much the intelligence of the people belonging to the upper class was without value, without substance and without import, how their beliefs were poorly founded, their attention to things of the mind feeble and indifferent, their tastes changeable and doubtful.

Seized by one of those fits of indignation, half real, half pretense, which first of all promotes the wish to be eloquent, and which suddenly warms a clear judgment that is ordinarily shadowed by benevolence, he showed how people whose only occupation was to make calls, dine *en ville,* and amuse themselves generally, became, by an irresistible fatality, the most frivolous and commonplace beings. They could be charming and amiable, but ordinary to a degree.

He showed that nothing with them had any depth, nothing was sincere, that their intellectual culture was nil, and their learning a simple varnish; in a word, they lived as dummies, giving the illusion and making the gestures of being the *élite* which they were not. He proved that as the frail roots of their instincts had grown amid conventions, and not amid realities, they could care for nothing sincerely, and that even the luxury itself of their existence was a vain satisfaction and not the appeasement of a refined want of their body. They live, he said, on the *side* of everything without penetrating or seeing anything, they live at the side of science, which they ignore; at the side of nature at which they do not know how to look; at the side of

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happiness because they are incapable of enjoying anything to any great degree, at the side of beauty of the world, or the beauty of art, for they speak of it without understanding it, and even without believing it, they do not know that intoxication which comes with tasting the joys of life and intelligence. They are incapable of becoming attached to anything sufficiently to like it uniquely, of being interested in anything sufficiently to be enlightened by the satisfaction of understanding.

The Baron de Corbelle tried to defend their gay world, but his arguments were inconsistent and irrefutable,— those arguments that melt before reason, like snow before a fire and which one cannot grasp, like the absurd and triumphant reasonings that a country clergyman gives, who demonstrates God. In conclusion he compared the worldly people with race horses which, it is quite true, serve for nothing, but which are the glory of the equine family.

Bertin maintained a disdainful and polite silence, he was annoyed before this adversary but the Baron's remarks became, as he thought, too foolish, so he adroitly interrupted his discourse.

He stated exactly the daily routine of the society man; with all the details ingeniously set forth he drew an irresistibly comic silhouette. He portrayed monsieur being dressed by his valet, after explaining to his barber who came to shave him some general ideas, then the moment for the morning ride, questioning the groom on the health of the horses, cantering through the Bois, his chief anxiety being to bow and be acknowledged, then luncheon with his wife, a drive in her *coupé* in the afternoon, and not speaking to her except to men-

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tion the people he had seen in the morning, then the calls going from drawing-room to drawing-room until the evening, and restrengthening his intelligence in the intercourse with his fellow creatures, in the evening,—a dinner with a prince where the general attitude of Europe was discussed, then finishing the *soirée* in the smoking-room or corridor at a dance, or the green room of the Opera, where his mild pretensions of a high liver could be easily satisfied by the appearance of a *mauvais lieu.*

The description was so just, without the sarcasm giving offense to anyone, that there was a general laugh.

The Duchess's portly person shook with suppressed mirth.

"No, really, it is too funny, I shall die with laughing," she said as her full chest heaved with little shakes.

Bertin, very elated, replied: "Oh! Madame, I assure you in the smart world we do not die of laughter; in fact, we scarcely laugh at all. We have the complaisance, by good taste, to look as though we are amused, and to make a pretense at laughing. We imitate the grimace very well indeed but we never do the real thing. Go in the cheap popular theaters, there you will see them laugh, go among the common people, you will see them laugh to suffocation, go into a soldiers' dormitory, you will see the men choking with laughter, their eyes full of tears, writhing on their beds before the antics of a gay companion. But in our drawing-rooms we never laugh. I tell you again we imitate everything even the laugh."

Musadieu stopped him.

"Pardon me! but I think you are too severe. Why

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you yourself, my dear fellow, do not disdain this class, even though you scoff at it."

Bertin smiled.

"I, why I love it."

"Well then?"

"I have a slight contempt for myself as a mongrel of doubtful origin."

"Oh! Bertin, all you say is just for effect," said the Duchess, "You are only posing."

And as he denied such a thing she terminated this discussion by declaring that all artists tried to make people take balloons for lanterns. The conversation then became general — ordinary and mild,— amiable and discreet. As the dinner was drawing to a close the Countess suddenly exclaimed, showing her full glasses before her:

"You see, I have not drank anything — not a drop, now we shall see if I am going to get thinner." The Duchess was furious, and insisted upon her taking a little mineral water, but the Countess was obdurate.

"Oh! the simpleton," cried the Duchess, "the sight of her daughter has turned her head, I beg of you, Guilleroy, do stop your wife from continuing this folly."

The Count who was explaining to Musadieu the plan of a mechanical thrashing machine that had just been invented in America had not heard his wife's remark.

"What folly, my dear Duchess?" he asked.

"The absurd folly of wishing to become thin," she replied.

The Count glanced at his wife with friendly indifference.

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"It is not my habit to oppose my wife's wishes," he said.

The Countess had risen from the table and taken her escort's arm, the Count offered his to the Duchess and they filed into the large drawing-room, the smaller room being reserved for day receptions. The immense *salon* was very lofty and light. The four walls were covered with beautiful panels of pale blue silk, with paintings of the olden times, in frames of white and gold, which took under the light of the lamps a soft, ethereal tint. In the center of the principal panel the portrait of Madame de Guilleroy painted by Olivier Bertin seemed to live and animate the room. Musadieu never passed the picture without complimenting the model on the artist's work. His opinion as a connoisseur, commissioned by the Government, having the value of a legal expert, he considered it his duty to affirm very often the superiority of the painting.

"It is true!" he remarked, "never have I seen a more beautiful modern portrait. It is so marvelously lifelike."

It had become almost a custom, a sort of practice of civility, like making the sign of the cross on entering a church to stand before it and express admiration. M. de Guilleroy had heard the praises sung so often that he was firmly convinced he possessed a chef-d'œuvre, but Olivier Bertin had grown accustomed to these eulogies and paid no more attention to them than if they were inquiries after the state of his health, nevertheless he arranged the reflector placed before it in a better position, the servant having carelessly adjusted it.

When they were seated the Duchess turned to the

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Count and said, "My nephew is coming to fetch me this evening, and ask you for a cup of tea."

They had both formed the same wish in regard to her nephew's and Annette's future and each had tacitly understood the other, although no word on the subject had as yet been mentioned.

The brother of the Duchess de Mortemain, the Marquis de Farandal, after losing the greater part of his fortune at gambling, died from a fall from his horse, leaving a widow and one son.

Now arrived at the age of eighteen this young man was one of the most sought after leaders of the cotillon in Europe, he had been sent for from Vienna and London to award the prizes at the royal balls. This dancing and sportive glory had to be established while he was quite young, so that he could make a rich marriage and replace his social success by political successes. As soon as he became a deputy, if he made a good marriage, he could then become one of the columns of the future throne, one of the king's counselors and a leader of the royalist party.

The Duchess was well informed and knew the immense fortune the Guilleroys possessed, it had heaped up, for they lived in a simple although luxurious apartment, when they could have lived *en grands seigneurs* in one of the most beautiful homes in Paris. She knew all about his successful speculations, his shrewd scent of a financier, his share in the most prosperous affairs that had been launched in ten years, hence her wish to marry her nephew to the daughter of a Normandy deputy, to whom this marriage would give a weighty influence in the aristocratic society of the retinue of princes.

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Guilleroy, who had made a rich marriage and doubled by his cleverness a large personal fortune, was plotting for higher ambitions. He believed in the return of a king, and hoped that when the time arrived, he would be in a position to profit by the event in the most satisfactory manner. As a simple deputy he did not count for much, but as father-in-law to the Marquis de Farandal whose ancestors had been the loyal and chosen friends of the royal house of France he would mount to the highest rank. Besides, the Duchess's friendship for his wife lent an intimate and valuable character to this union. The fear that the Marquis would meet and be attracted by another young girl, had made him send for his daughter so as to hasten the event.

Madame de Mortemain had guessed his project and lent a silent complicity and this same day, although she had not known of his daughter's return, she had made an appointment with her nephew to fetch her at the Guilleroy home, so that little by little he would get on closer terms with the family. To-night for the first time the Count and the Duchess spoke of their mutual hopes, and before she left, a treaty of alliance was concluded.

At the other end of the salon they were laughing gayly. M. de Musadieu was telling the Baroness of the presentation of a negro Ambassador to the President of the Republic,— when the Marquis de Farandal was announced.

He appeared in the doorway, then stood still. With a quick and habitual movement of the arm he fixed a monocle on his right eye, and left it there, as if to find out what kind of place he was entering, and possibly to

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give the people before him the pleasure of looking at him and note the way he entered; then by a quick twist of the cheek and the eyebrow, he let the monocle, which was attached to a silken hair chain, fall from his eye, and walked quickly up to Madame de Guilleroy, whose outstretched hand he kissed as he bent courteously over it. He did the same to his aunt, then shook hands with the rest, going from one to the other with an easy grace.

He was a tall, fine youth with a red mustache, which had already required shaving; he had the figure of an officer and the gait of an English sportsman. One felt when looking at him that he was a young man who preferred to exercise his limbs rather than his head, and cared most for those things which developed strength and physical activity, although he was well instructed, for he had learnt and was learning more every day; he studied with an intense application of mind everything that would be of use to him later on in life. He learnt by heart the dates in history, but unfortunately forgot the precepts of the facts, the elementary notions of political economy necessary for a deputy to know, the A. B. C. of sociology practiced by the ruling class.

Musadieu estimated him at once and mentally observed: "In a few years from now he will be a great man." Bertin appreciated his skill and his strength, they belonged to the same fencing classes, often hunted together, and frequently met when riding in the Bois, so that they had many tastes in common, and that instinctive free masonry which creates between two men an ever ready subject of conversation, as agreeable to one as to the other.

When the Marquis was introduced to Annette de

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Guilleroy he at once suspected his aunt's wishes; after making her a low bow he looked her over, with the quick keen glance of an admirer.

He thought her pretty, and above all, full of great promise. His reign was so brilliant in the petticoat government that he had become a connoisseur on the debutantes' charms and could make a sure prediction as to their future, just like an expert when tasting wines that are too tart.

He only exchanged a few insignificant phrases with her, then sat down beside the Baroness de Corbelle, and chatted in a low voice.

The evening broke up early. When every one had left, and Annette was in bed, the lights put out and the servants gone up to their rooms, the Count tramped up and down the salon which was now dimly lit by two candles. The Countess de Guilleroy was half asleep on the divan, but he kept her there more than an hour, speaking of his hopes of the future, what attitude she should adopt, and how she must take precautions and provide against all schemes.

It was very late when he released her: he was delighted with his soirée and went to his room murmuring:

"*Je crois bien que c'est une affaire faite.*"

CHAPTER III

"WHEN are you coming, *mon ami?* I have not seen you for three whole days, and it seems so long. My child takes up a great deal of my time, but I cannot live without seeing you."

The artist who was drawing some outlines, still try-

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ing to find a new subject, re-read the Countess' note, then opened the drawer of his desk and placed it with a heap of other letters that had piled up there since the beginning of their *liaison*.

Thanks to the facilities of their worldly life, they were able to see each other almost every day; from time to time she would go to the studio and sit for an hour or two in the same fauteuil where she had posed, while he continued his work, but as she did not wish to be talked about by the servants, she preferred for these daily *rendezvous*, these little drafts of love, to receive him at her home or to meet him at some reception. They contrived to arrange them in advance, and it all seemed perfectly natural to the Count.

Twice a week the artist with a few other friends dined at her home. On Monday he would visit her regularly in her box at the Opera, then they would make an appointment at such and such a house, where it appeared as if by chance they met at the same hour. He knew the evening she did not go out, so he would call and have a cup of tea with her, feeling when alone with her at her home how securely and tenderly he was lodged in her affection. He was so captured by the habit of finding her somewhere, of being near her for a few moments, of exchanging a few words and mingling their thoughts, that he felt, although the bright flame of his passion had a long time burnt down, he still had a constant wish to see her.

For three days he had not been to see his friends, he knew that Annette's return would cause some excitement. He was bored already, and felt slightly annoyed that they had not sent for him before, but he had decided that he would not be the first to make advances.

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The Countess' letter raised his spirits like a whip. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, he decided to go at once and call upon her, then he would see her before she went for her drive.

His valet quickly appeared in answer to his impatient ring.

"What's the weather like, Joseph?" he asked.

"Beautiful, sir."

"Warm?"

"No! sir."

"White waistcoat, blue coat, gray hat."

He always dressed in the height of fashion, but even though his clothes were made by the best tailor, it was the way he wore them and how he walked,—the tightened vest, the pale felt hat placed at a certain angle, that gave him an air of distinction, and showed at once that he was an artist, and a bachelor.

When he arrived at the house the servant told him that Madame was just dressing to take a drive in the Bois. He was annoyed and waited for her.

As usual he commenced to stride up and down, going from one lounge to another, from the windows to the walls in the great room darkened by the rich curtains. On the fragile tables with gilt feet were knick-knacks of all sorts, useless, pretty and costly things strewn about in artistic disorder; some small, old boxes of chased gold, miniature snuff-boxes, statuettes of ivory, then some objects in dull silver that were quite modern, peculiar, odd things distinctly of English origin — a small kitchen stove, a cat drinking from a saucepan, a cigarette case in the shape of a big loaf of bread, a coffee pot for matches, and then, in an antique casket, quite an assortment of dolls, collars, bracelets, rings,

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brooches, earrings, of diamonds, sapphires, rubies and emeralds, microscopic fantasies, which looked as though they were made by Lilliputian jewelers.

Now and again he picked up an object that he had given her on some anniversary, he took it, turned it over and examined it, with absent-minded indifference then put it back in its place. In a corner, some rare books richly bound were opened in readiness to read on a *guéridon* supported by a column foot, which was conveniently placed before a little round sofa. On the stand was the *Revue des Deux-Mondes,* the book was slightly worn, the leaves dog-eared, as if it had been read many times, then there were other publications with leaves uncut; the *Arts Modernes,* that one subscribed to simply on account of the high price, the subscription being four hundred francs a year, and the *Feuille libre,* a small thin book with blue cover where the most recent poets,— called the *Enervés,* launch out. Between the windows stood the Countess' desk, a dainty bit of furniture of the XVIII Century, upon which she wrote her letters to him. Some works and familiar books were left on the desk which showed the mind and the heart of woman: *Musset, Manon Lescaut, Werther,* and to show that one was not a stranger to complicated sensations, and to the mysteries of psychology: *Les Fleurs au Mal, Le Rouge et le Noir, La Femme au XVIII siècle, Adolphe.* At the side of the books was placed a beautiful hand mirror, a masterpiece of the goldsmith's craft, the glass was laid down on a square of embroidered velvet, so that one could admire the curious work of gold and silver on the back of the mirror.

Bertin took the glass and looked into it. The last few years he had aged terribly, and although he con-

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sidered his face had more character than formerly, he felt gloomy at the sight of his sagging cheeks, and the lines around his eyes. The door behind him opened and Annette's voice called out:

"Good morning, M. Bertin."

"Good morning, *petite*, how do you do?"

"Very well, thanks, and you?"

"And so you have decided not to '*tutoyer*' me?"

"No! really it would embarrass me."

"*Allons donc!*"

"Yes! it would, you intimidate me."

"How is that?"

"Because . . . well, because I consider you are not young enough or old enough for me to address you in the second person."

The painter laughed heartily.

"Before this reason then I shall not insist."

She suddenly blushed up to the roots of her hair and said confusedly:

"Mamma told me to say she would be down very soon, and to ask you if you would like to drive with us in the Bois de Boulogne."

"Yes! Certainly. Are you alone?"

"No, the Duchess de Mortemain is coming."

"I shall be delighted."

"Then will you excuse me a moment. May I go and put on my hat?"

"Go, *petite.*"

As she went out of the room the Countess entered, gowned, and veiled ready to start. She held out both hands to the artist.

"We never see you now, Olivier. What are you doing?" she said.

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"I was afraid I might be in the way just at this moment."

The way in which she said "Olivier" expressed all her reproach and all her love.

"You are the sweetest woman in the world, Any," he said, moved by the intonation of his name.

Their little heart quarrel ended, her voice took its usual gay tone.

"We will go and call for the Duchess," she said, "and then have a lovely drive through the wood. Nanette must see it all. Come along, we are ready."

The landau was waiting for them at the carriage entrance. Bertin seated himself opposite the two women, and the carriage started in the midst of the horses pawing the ground under the sonorous archway.

All along the boulevard from the Madeleine it seemed that the gayety of the early spring had fallen on the people. The warm air and bright sunshine gave the men an air of *fête,* and the women a look of hope and love; it made the street urchins cut capers and the scullery maids put their baskets on the benches to run and play with their brothers the young ragamuffins, the *concierges* canary birds made their throats hoarse chattering their shrill, sweet welcome to the advent of spring: but the old worn-out horses, harnessed to the cabs went their usual dejected pace — their last worn-out trot.

"The glorious weather! how good it is to be alive," murmured the Countess.

Under the full daylight, the painter looked at them both — the mother and daughter. Decidedly they were different, and yet at the same time so alike — this one was so well the continuation of that one, made of

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the same blood, the same flesh, animated with the same life. The likeness was strongest in the eyes, their wonderful eyes,— violet blue specked with black, the color so fresh and clear in the daughter's and slightly faded in the mother's; both fixed on him the same look when he spoke to them, that it seemed they must give the same reply. It seemed surprising when he made them laugh and chat that he had before him two distinct women,— one who had lived, and one who was going to live. One was a pretty, innocent girl, ready for love and luck, ignored and ignorant. She was sailing out of the harbor onto the waves like a ship, while the other was on her way back, after having crossed the existence — and loved. He felt touched when he thought it was he above all others whom she had chosen, and whom she still preferred, she who was so beautiful, sitting here with him in the landau, in the warm air of spring. As he threw his gratitude in a look, she seemed to know his thoughts and he felt her thanks in the light rustling of her gown against him. In his turn he said softly:

"Yes! the glorious weather."

When they had called at the rue de Varenne for the Duchess, they drove towards the Invalides, crossed the Seine, reached the Avenue des Champs-Elysées, then drove up toward the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, in the midst of a stream of carriages. Annette was now seated at the side of the artist, with her back to the horses. She looked with eager and naive eyes on the lines of carriages. From time to time, when the Duchess and the Countess acknowledged someone with a courteous bow, she asked quickly:

"Who is that?"

They named "les Polaiglin," or "les Puicelci," or

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"la comtesse de Lochrist," or "la belle madame Mandelière." They drove up the noisy and crowded road and arrived at the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne. The line of carriages which was a little less thick than before the Arc de Triomphe seemed to struggle in an endless course. The cabs, landaus, heavy family carriages which were keeping the direct line, were suddenly outdistanced by a smart victoria, harnessed to a high-stepping trotter, carrying with a mad speed,— past all the rolling multitude, citizen or aristocrat, ahead of all classes, all hierarchies,— a young indolent woman, gowned in a light and dashing toilet, who threw behind to the occupants of the carriage as she was whirled past them, a strange perfume of an unknown flower.

"Quick! who is that lady?" asked Annette.

"I don't know," replied Bertin, while the Duchess and the Countess exchanged a smile.

The leaves were sprouting, the familiar nightingales of this Parisian garden were already singing in the young verdure. They broke the line as they neared the lake, and then, from carriage to carriage, there was an incessant exchange of bows and smiles, and cordial greetings when the wheels touched. The Duchess' head was bent all the time before the raised hats and the inclined bodies. She seemed to be passing a *revue*, and brought to her mind, all she knew, and all she supposed of the people as they filed before her.

"Look child, there is the beautiful Madame Mandelière, the beauty of the Republic."

In a light and smart victoria the beauty of the Republic let herself be admired, with apparent indifference for this unquestionable glory. She was very striking with her great sombre eyes, low forehead under a

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casque of raven-black hair, and her determined mouth, which was a little too large.

"She is very beautiful," said Bertin.

The Countess did not like to hear him praise other women, she shrugged her shoulders and remained silent. But the young girl with the instinct of rivalry already awakened, said boldly:

"I don't think she is beautiful."

The artist turned to her. "You mean to say she is not lovely, *petite?*"

"No, she is not, most decidedly not, she looks as though she had been soaked in ink."

The Duchess laughed delightedly.

"Bravo, child, for the last six years half the men of Paris have knelt at the feet of that negress. Look rather at the Countess de Lochrist. There she is."

The Countess sat alone in her carriage with a white poodle beside her; she was blonde, with dark eyes and as dainty as a miniature. The fine lines which had shown for the last five or six years beneath her eyes were a theme of exclamations to her admirers. She passed with a bow and a fixed smile on her lips. But Nanette did not appear at all enthusiastic.

"No!" she said, shaking her head. "She is no longer very young."

In the various discussions they had had on these two rivals, Bertin did not speak up for the Countess, but he felt annoyed at this intolerance of a mere child.

"*Bigre!*" he said, "whether she is admired more or less, she is charming, and I sincerely hope you will grow as pretty as she is."

"Let her say what she likes," said the Duchess. "You only notice women when they are past thirty.

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The *petite* is quite right. You only praise women who are no longer young."

"Pardon me, Duchess," he exclaimed, "a woman is not beautiful until late, not until all her expression is drawn out."

He explained how the first freshness of youth is only a varnish over the beauty which is ripening, he stated that men of the world do not make a mistake in paying little attention to young girls in all their freshness, and that they were right when they did not proclaim them beautiful, until the last stage of their blossoming.

The Countess was happy.

"He is right," she thought, "he judges as an artist, a fresh young face is very nice but just a little bit ordinary."

And the painter insisted, explaining at what moment a face, losing little by little the undefined grace of youth, takes its definite shape, its expression, its physiognomy.

At each word the Countess made "yes" with a little bend of her head, and the more he affirmed with the warmth of an advocate who pleads, with the animation of a suspect who sustains his cause, the more she approved by look and words, as if they were allied to strengthen each other against a danger, to defend themselves against a menacing and false opinion. Annette scarcely listened to them, she was too occupied in looking about. Her laughing face had become grave, she sat silent and dizzy with joy as she gazed on the moving throng. The sun, the trees, the carriages, all this beautiful, rich, gay life was to be hers. Every day she could come here and in her turn be acknowledged and envied, and men, when they saw her, would perhaps

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say that she was beautiful. She noticed those whom she thought were the most distinguished-looking, and always asked their names, without occupying herself with other things, than the replies, which sometimes would awake in her an echo of respect and admiration, when she had read of them so much in the newspaper or in history. She had never seen so many celebrities and could hardly believe that they were real. It seemed as though she were a spectator at a performance. The cabs inspired her with a contempt mingled with disgust, they annoyed and irritated her.

"I think only private carriages should be allowed to come here," she remarked.

"*Eh! bien, Mademoiselle,* then what about our 'equality,' 'liberty' and 'fraternity,'" asked Bertin.

She made a little grimace which signified "*à d'autres*" and said: "There is a wood for the cabs, the Bois de Vincennes, for example."

"You are behind the times, *petite,* and you do not yet know that we are swimming in full democracy; besides, if you would like to see the Bois free of all this *mélange,* come in the morning, then you will only see the flowers, the choicest flowers of society."

Then he pictured to her, with the vividness that was his characteristic — the morning wood, with its cavaliers and horsewomen, this most select *rendezvous,* where everybody knew everybody by their names, pet names, relations, titles, qualities and vices, as though they all lived in the same *quartier* or in the same little town.

"Do you come here often?" she asked.

"Very often, it is the most delightful spot in Paris," he replied.

"You ride horseback in the morning?"

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"Of course."

"And then in the afternoon you make calls?"

"Yes."

"Then when do you do your work?"

"Well, I work . . . sometimes, but then I have chosen a special line following my tastes. As I am a painter of beautiful women, I, of course, must see them all the time, and follow them about a little."

"On foot and horseback," she murmured without smiling.

He threw her an oblique and satisfied look which seemed to say: "*Tiens, tiens* already showing wit, in time you will do very well, little one."

A cold breeze from the great expanse of open country which had scarcely awakened to the springtime, swept over the beautiful, frivolous Bois. The leaves on the trees trembled, the women, all with the same movement drew their wraps, which had fallen *en arrière* over their shapely shoulders. The horses commenced to prance briskly up and down the *allées,* as if the sharp breeze had whipped them up in passing. They drove home quickly to the silvery-toned noise of the shaking curb chains, under the oblique golden rays of the setting sun.

"Are you going home?" asked Madame de Guilleroy of the artist, whose habits she well knew.

"No, I am going to the club."

"Then we will drop you there, *en passant.*"

"That will suit me. Many thanks."

"When are you going to invite us with the Duchess to take luncheon with you?" she asked.

"Whatever day you like," he answered.

The painter, appointed by the *Parisiennes* who had

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baptized him a "Watteau realist" and whom the back-biters called the "photographer of cloaks and gowns," very often received at dinner and luncheon, the beautiful women whose features he had reproduced and many others besides, most of them celebrities; they were amused and thoroughly enjoyed these little fêtes, given in a bachelor's home.

"The day after to-morrow then, will that suit you, my dear Duchess?" asked Madame de Guilleroy.

"Yes! how charming of you to think of me. M. Bertin never includes me in his parties. A true sign that I am no longer young," she said.

The Countess who was in the habit of considering the artist's home almost as her own, said: "Only we four, '*les quatre du landau,*' the Duchess, Annette, you and I, *n'est-ce pas, grand artiste?*"

"Only just ourselves," he said, as he stepped out of the carriage, "and you shall eat some crawfish *à l'alsacienne.*"

"Oh! you will give *des passions* to the *petite.*"

He stood for a moment at the carriage to say good-bye, then walked quickly through the great door into the vestibule of the club. He threw his overcoat and cane to the group of footmen, who had risen like soldiers at the entrance of an officer, then walked up the wide staircase, passed before another brigade of attendants in knee-breeches, pushed open a door, and suddenly felt as sprightly as a young man, as he heard at the end of the corridor a continued noise of foils clashing, exclamations hurled by strong voices — "Touched!" "My turn!" "Passed!" "Touched!" "Your turn!"

In the *salle d'armes,* the fencers,— dressed in gray

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canvas, with vests of skin, trousers tightened at the ankle, a sort of apron falling over the stomach, one arm in the air with hand bent, the other hand covered with an enormous glove holding the thin, supple blade,—stretched and straightened themselves with the brusque flexibility of mechanical puppets. Others were resting and talking; most of them were out of breath, perspiring, and mopping their foreheads and necks with handkerchiefs they held in their hands, others were looking on at the assaults, seated on the square divans arranged along the great room; there was Liverdy against Landa, and le *maître du Cercle,* Taillade, against big Rocdiane.

Bertin smiling, shook hands with the men. "I challenge you," he cried to the Baron de Baverie.

"I'm yours, *mon cher,*" replied the Baron.

He passed on into the dressing-room to change his suit. It was a long time since he had felt in such good form, and knowing that he was going to make a splendid attack, he threw off his clothes with all the impatience of a school boy. As soon as he had his opponent before him, he attacked him with the utmost ardor. In ten minutes he had touched him eleven times, and thoroughly tired him out, so that he was obliged to crave quarters. Then he challenged Punisimont, and when he was through with him, his fellow artist,— Amaury Maldant.

The cold *douche* afterwards chilled his panting flesh and reminded him of the time when he was twenty years old, when, on the hot summer afternoons he used to jump from the bridges in the *environs* of Paris, and duck his head into the Seine while the gaping peasants looked on in astonishment.

"Going to dine here?" asked Maldant.

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"Yes."

"We have a table with Liverdy, Rocdiane, and Landa. Get a move on, it's quarter of seven now."

There was a buzz of conversation when they entered the dining-room which was already crowded with men. There were all the vagrant "nighters" of Paris, the unoccupied and the occupied, all those who, after seven o'clock of an evening, can do nothing but dine at the club and hang upon the chance of meeting someone or something.

When the five friends were seated at the table, Liverdy, the banker, a strong, thick-set man of forty years, said to Bertin: "You seemed possessed with the devil this evening."

"Yes," replied the painter, "to-day I did astonishing things."

The others smiled, and Amaury Maldant, the landscape painter, a thin, little, baldheaded man with a gray beard, said slyly: "I also have a return of strength in April, just enough to make me grow a few branches, a half a dozen at the most, then it flows off into sentiment."

The Marquis de Rocdiane and the Count de Landa pitied him, both of them were older than he, although they did not look so, but it was impossible to guess their ages. Both were club-men, horsemen, and sportsmen, and constant exercise had made their bodies as flexible as steel. They boasted of being even younger than the enervated idlers of the new generation.

Rocdiane was of high birth, and frequented all the smartest *salons,* but he had been suspected of underhanded dealings in money matters of all kinds; he passed a great deal of his time in the gambling houses;

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he was married and separated from his wife, but she allowed him an income, he was an administrator of Belgian and Portuguese estates. He carried haughtily on his energetic Don Quixote face the slightly tarnished honor of a gentleman, which he cleansed from time to time with blood from a duel wound.

The Count de Landa, a good-natured giant, proud of his stature and his shoulders, could not make up his mind to dine at home more than three times a week; on the other days after the *séance* of the fencing class, he stayed at the club with his friends. "The club is a family," he said, "the family for those who have not any, for those who will never have any, and for those who are bored with what they have."

The conversation started about women — anecdotes were told, boasts were made, and indiscreet confidences whispered.

The Marquis de Rocdiane spoke freely about his mistresses. They were society women and although he did not mention their names, from his precise indications, it was quite easy for them to guess. The banker Liverdy designated his by their Christian names; he would make the remark: "Just at that time I was at the best with the wife of a diplomat, and just as I was leaving her one evening, I said to her: 'Now, my little Marguerite, I . . .'" he stopped, as they all smiled, then exclaimed: "*Hein!* What have I said? *Mon Dieu!* one ought to get in the habit of calling all women by the name of Sophie."

Olivier Bertin was always very reserved, when they questioned him, he invariably gave them the same reply: "Oh! I am quite content with my models."

They pretended to believe him, and Landa, a rover

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after street girls, was exalted at the thought of all the pretty "bits" who were walking about the streets, and the young girls who would pose before the painter for ten francs an hour.

In proportion, as the bottles emptied, all these *grisons* as they were called by the younger members of the club, became more and more animated, their faces were flushed, their voices thick and their eyes reddened with passionate desires.

After the coffee, Rocdiane let fall some more veracious indiscretions, and forgot his *mondaines* to boast about the ordinary *cocotte*. "Paris," he said, as he held up a glass of kummel, "is the only town where a man does not get old, the only city where, at the age of fifty years,— providing he is strong and in good health,— he can always find a little girl of eighteen years, as pretty as an angel, to love him."

Landa, after the cordials, agreed with Rocdiane, mentioning the *petites filles* who loved him every day.

But Liverdy, more skeptic and pretending to know exactly the worth of women, murmured: "Of course, they tell you that they love you."

"Why, they prove it to me, my dear fellow," replied Landa smartly.

"Puh! those proofs don't count for anything."

"They're all I want," he said chuckling.

Rocdiane cried out: "*Sacrebleu!* but they themselves think it, do you think that a pretty little *gueuse* of twenty years, who for five or six years has been going around seeing life — the life of Paris — where all our mustaches have taught her, and spoilt for her the taste of kisses, do you think she still knows how to distinguish a man of thirty from a man of sixty?

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Allons donc! Quelle blague! She has seen too much and knows too much. Listen! I bet you that at the bottom of her heart she prefers the old banker to a young idiot. Have men an age here? *Eh! mon cher,* we get younger when our hair whitens, and the whiter it is the more they say they love us, and the more they show it, the more we believe it."

They rose up from the table overfed and excited by the alcohol — ready for all conquests, and they began to deliberate how to pass the evening. Bertin wanted the circus,— Rocdiane the Hippodrome,— Maldant the Eden, and Landa the Folies-Bergère, when the sound of violins being tuned up in the distance came to them.

"*Tiens!* there is music at the club to-night," said Rocdiane.

"Yes!" replied Bertin, "suppose we stay here for ten minutes before going out."

All agreed. They walked across the *salon,* billiard room and card room, then arrived in a sort of box *en face* the gallery of musicians. Four men lounging in the armchairs were waiting with a meditative air, while down below in the center of the rows of empty chairs were a dozen others, some seated, some standing.

The conductor of the orchestra tapped on his desk with his stick.

Olivier Bertin adored music as some men adore opium. It made him dream. The full, rich notes of the instruments moved him strangely, he felt carried away in a sort of nervous intoxication which made his body and his intelligence vibrate incredibly. His imagination rushed wildly on, maddened by the melodies, across soft dreams and sweet reveries; with closed

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eyes, and arms loosely folded, he listened to the beautiful strains, and saw things which passed before his eyes and in his spirit.

The orchestra played a symphony by Hayden, and the painter, as his eyelids dropped over his eyes, saw again the Bois, the streams of carriages, and opposite to him in the landau, the Countess and her child. He heard their voices, listened to their words, felt the swaying of the carriage, and breathed the air full of the fresh odor of the spring leaves.

Three times his companions spoke to him, and interrupted the vision, he answered them, and then closed his eyes again, and the vision returned and the swaying movement of the carriage recommenced, just as the motion of the rolling boat comes to us as we lie in the immobility of our bed after a long voyage on the sea. Then he went far away, on a long journey, but always with the two women, sometimes they were in a railway carriage seated opposite him, sometimes at foreign hotels. All through the melodies the orchestra played, they were by his side, as if during the drive in the spring sunshine they had left the image of their two faces impressed in the depths of his eyes.

A silence — then the noise of moving chairs and voices chased away the dream vapor and instead — he saw around him his four companions fast asleep in their chairs. He woke them all up.

"Now then, wake up! What's the next move?" he said, poking each in turn.

"I'd like to stay where I am and sleep a little longer," replied Rocdiane, only half awake.

"I should too," said Landa, drowsily.

"And I . . . And I . . ."

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"*Eh bien!* I'm going home," said Bertin, getting up. "I feel tired."

He felt just the reverse. He was wide awake, and very animated, but he wanted to leave them for he knew too well how the evenings finished round the gambling tables of the club.

So he went home, and the next day,—after a night of nerves, one of those nights which puts the artist into a state of brain activity, which is baptized "Inspiration,"—he decided not to go out, but to work all day.

His day was excellent, one of those days of easy production, when the ideas of his brain, seemed to slide down to his hand, and fix themselves on the canvas. He was shut in from the world: the doors were closed to everyone, and he was alone in the dark, friendly peace of the studio. With clear eye, and mind lucid and alert, he tasted that happiness which is given to the few artists only, who bring forth their work in joyfulness. During these hours of work nothing existed for him but the piece of canvas, where an image was being created under the caress of his brush, and he felt in this work of fruitfulness, a strange and happy sensation of the fullness of life which intoxicates and envelopes us. By the evening he was tired out, but it was a healthy fatigue and he went to bed happy, with the pleasant thoughts of his friend and the party on the morrow.

The table was covered with flowers, the menu carefully chosen, for Madame de Guilleroy was a *petite gourmande raffinée.* When the champagne was brought on the table, there was an energetic, but short resistance, the painter insisted and finally carried the day.

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"But the *petite* will be drunk," cried the Countess.

"*Mon Dieu!* She will have to be the first time," said the Duchess indulgently.

They were obliged to leave soon after luncheon, as the Duchess and the Countess had a meeting at the *Comité des Mères Françaises,* and they had to take Annette home before going to the *Société,* but Bertin offered to walk to the Boulevard Malesherbes with her and the two went off together.

"Let us go by the longest way," she said.

"How would you like to stroll through the Parc Monceau, it is so pretty there now. We will look at the kiddies and their *nounous.*"

"Yes. I should like to."

They crossed over the Avenue Vélasquez and passed through the monumental gilt gate, which serves as ensign and entrance to this lovely little park — displaying in the center of Paris, in the midst of the princely homes — its artificial and verdant grace. Along the wide *allées* which stretched across the lawns, and the groups of trees and flowers, a crowd of men and women were seated on the iron chairs, watching the people as they strolled up and down; in the little shady paths, winding like a stream, a group of children crawled in the sand, ran or played with a skipping rope, under the indifferent eye of the nurse, or the careful look of the mother.

The immense trees rounded off in domes, like monuments of leaves, the giant chestnut-trees with their weighty verdure splashed with red and white clusters of blossoms, the conspicuous sycamores, the decorative palm-trees with their trunks skillfully warped made a

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lovely perspective of the sloping and undulating grass-plots.

It was warm. The turtledoves warbled in the foliage and made little rounds of visits flying from the top of one tree to another, while below, the chirruping sparrows bathed themselves in the *arc-en-ciel,* sprinkling a shower of sunlit water drops on the fresh green grass around. On their pedestals the white statues gleam and stand out boldly against the new green foliage — here is a youth in marble pulling out from his foot an imaginary thorn, as though he had been pricked a while ago when chasing Diana as she flew towards the little lake enclosed in the thickets, which shelter the ruin of a temple. Other statues are embracing,— cold lovers! at the foot of the great trees, others are dreaming as they hold their knee in their hands, a cascade froths, and tumbles on the pretty grotto, a tree, truncated like a column holds up a clinging ivy, a tomb bears an inscription. This beautiful little park no more recalls the wild forest, than the heap of stones piled up on the grassplots recalls the Acropolis.

Olivier Bertin walked along silently beside Annette, he was too preoccupied to talk to her; he was looking at the variegated colors, at the moving life of the garden.

"Oh! the little love," cried Annette.

A small boy with golden curls had stopped in his play to look up at her with his big blue eyes filled with childish admiration.

"Isn't he a darling?" she exclaimed.

Then she passed a *revue* of all the little children, and the joy that she had in seeing these live dolls, their

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bonny faces, and pretty frocks and ribbons made her chatter and become very communicative. She walked slowly on making remarks to Bertin about the little ones, their nurses and their mothers. The fine, healthy children brought forth exclamations of delight, and the pale, weakly ones, some soft words of pity. He listened to her far more amused at what she said, than with the antics of the youngsters.

"It is beautiful," he said, thinking of his work, and what an exquisite picture a corner of the park with a group of mothers, nurses and children would make. Why had he not thought of it before?

"You like the youngsters?" he asked.

"I adore them."

She seemed as though she wanted to take them up and kiss and fondle them, it was the maternal and tender desire of a future mother: and as he looked at her he wondered at the secret instinct hidden in the heart of woman.

As she was inclined to talk, he questioned her about her tastes; she admitted her hopes for worldly success, and glory, in pretty, naive manner: she wanted beautiful horses, she knew almost as much about them as a horse-dealer: the greater part of the farms of Roncières were given over to horse-breeding. She did not seem to trouble herself about a *fiancé* any more than about an apartment which one so easily finds in the multitude of *étages* to let.

As they neared the lake, two swans and six ducks came slowly swimming along, looking as clean and as calm as though they were china birds. Just by the side of the lake a young woman was sitting in a chair,

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an opened book on her knees, her eyes looking straight before her, her soul flown away in a reverie.

She sat there looking as still as a wax figure. Homely, humble, dressed in a modest manner, as one who does not think to attract — a nursery governess perhaps — she had started on the journey for the Dream, carried on her way by a phrase, or a word that had touched her heart. She continued without doubt, in the direction of her own hopes, the romance commenced in the book.

Bertin looked at her in surprise. "How beautiful it is to be lost like that," he said.

They passed before her, then returned and passed again, but she did not notice them. She had gone so far on her long flight of thought.

The artist turned to Annette.

"*Dis donc! petite,*" he said, "would it annoy you to pose for me, once or twice?"

"Why no! on the contrary, I should be very pleased," she answered.

"Look well at that girl then, who is walking in the Ideal."

"There on the chair?"

"Yes! Well, you will sit like that on a chair with an opened book on your knees and you will try to do like she is doing. Have you ever dreamed, while awake?"

"Why, yes."

"What about?"

He tried to make her confess what she saw when she took her flight into the clouds, but she would not reply, she evaded his questions, turned her head away,

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and looked at the ducks swimming after the pieces of bread that a woman was throwing to them, she seemed confused as though he had touched a sensitive chord in her nature. Then, to change the subject, she began to tell him about her life at Roncières, she spoke of her grandmother and told him that she read to her several hours every day, and she was afraid she would be very lonely and sad now she had left her.

As the painter listened to her, he felt as gay as a bird, gayer than he had ever been before. All that she said to him,— all the small and frivolous details of the simple life of a young girl amused and interested him.

"Let us sit down," he said.

They sat down near the water and the swans came to the border of the lake hoping to get some bread crumbs.

Bertin felt some distant remembrances come back to him, remembrances of by-gone years, that had been drowned in forgetfulness, but were now returning to life. What makes them return, like this? We do not know.

They sprang up quickly, all kinds of old memories, and so numerous that it seemed as though a hand was moving the casket of his memory. He wondered why his old life was bubbling up like this — memories had rushed back to his brain many times before but never so forcibly as now. There was always a cause for these sudden evocations — a material and simple cause — a sound, a smile, a perfume. How many times a woman's dress with the evaporated breath of an essence had awakened within him a crowd of memories! Sometimes at the bottom of an old bottle of perfume,

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he had found bits of his existence, and all the odors that came to him by chance, those of the street, the field, the houses, the furniture — both sweet and foul — the warm odors of a summer evening, the cold odors of a winter night, often revived some far gone reminiscence, as if the fragrance kept the dead things embalmed, like the aromatics which conserve mummies. What is it now? Is it the damp grass, or the chestnut blossom recalling his past? No! then what? Is it something he has seen, which is bringing back his youth? What has he seen? Nothing.

Among the people they had passed, one of them perhaps resembled a long lost face, and unconsciously had fastened on his heart the hand glass of the past, or, perhaps it was some sound.

Very often the chance soft notes of a piano, an unknown voice, or even a street-organ playing some old fashioned air had brusquely taken him back to his boyhood, making his chest heave with forgotten emotions. But this continual recall, so incessant and unseizurable, almost annoyed him. There was something around him — near to him, that was reviving his dead emotions.

"It is getting a little cold," he said. "Shall we walk on?"

They got up and continued their way.

He looked at the poor people sitting on the benches, those to whom a two *sous* chair was a luxury. Annette looked at them also and wondered pityingly what their life was and what work they did. She wondered why, if they were so poor, they could idle their time away in the beautiful public park.

And all the time the artist sees the years that have

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glided by. It seems as if a fly were buzzing in his ears, and filling them with confused murmurs of days that are no more.

The young girl, seeing that he was dreaming, asked:

"What is the matter? You look so sad."

Then he trembled right to his heart. Who said it? She or her mother? Not her mother with the voice of the present, but her mother with her voice of the past,—her youthful voice which had changed, though he knew it, and it made him tremble.

He smiled at her, as he replied:

"There is nothing the matter. You amuse me ever so much, you are so pretty, and you recall to me your mother."

How was it he had not understood quicker this strange echo of lost words, which were coming to him now from new lips?

"Speak again," he said.

"What about?"

"Anything. Tell me what your governesses taught you, did you like them?"

She began to chatter.

He listened to her and felt an increasing disquietude, he watched and waited amidst the phrases of this little girl who was almost a stranger to his heart, for a word, a sound, a laugh which seemed to have been put in her baby throat, when her mother was young, and had stayed there.

Occasionally, an intonation of the voice would move him strangely. Between their words there was some dissimilarity which he had not at first noticed, but this difference only made the brusque awakening of her mother's speech the more forceful. Up to now he had

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only noticed with a curious and pleased eye the resemblance of their faces, but now the mystery of this resurrected voice, mixed them in such a way, that when he turned his head from her so as not to look at her, he asked himself if it was not her mother speaking thus to him, as she did twelve years ago.

Then, when disillusioned by this evocation, he turned back again to her, he felt again, at meeting her look, a trembling as he had felt when looking into her mother's eyes, in the first days of their love.

Three times they had walked around the park, passing again the same persons, the same *nounous;* the same children. Annette was looking at the large houses which surround the park and asked him the names of the people who lived in them. She wanted to know everything about everybody, she questioned him with an eager curiosity, seeming to fill up her woman's memory with information, and her eyes brightened with interest; she seemed to hear with her eyes, as much as her ears.

When they reached the pavilion which separates the two doors from the outside boulevard, Bertin looked at the clock, the hand pointed to four o'clock.

"We must go home now," he said.

And they walked leisurely to the Boulevard Malesherbe. When he left her he continued his way towards the Place de la Concorde, intending to make a visit on the other side of the Seine. He hummed as he walked along, he wanted to run, he felt so young and alert. Paris seemed to him more beautiful than ever.

"Decidedly," he thought, smiling, "the springtime gives a fresh coating of paint to us all."

He was experiencing that sentiment when the excited

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mind feels and understands everything with a greater pleasure. The eye sees better, appears clearer and more impressionable, one feels a keener joy in looking around, the sense of taste, smell, and touch is quickened, as if an almighty hand had come and refreshened all the colors of the earth and re-animated the movements of all its beings, had wound the activities of our sensations just as we should wind up a clock that has stopped.

As he looked about him, he noticed hundreds of interesting, amusing things.

"How strange," he said, "to think that there are moments when I do not know what subject to paint. He felt his intelligence so free and so discerning, that all his work of an artist appeared to him commonplace, and he conceived a new way to express life, more real, more original; and suddenly he was seized with the wish to return home and work; he would go back and shut himself up in his studio.

But as soon as he was alone before his canvas, this ardor, which had so excited his blood only a little while ago, suddenly cooled, and he felt weary as he sat down on the sofa and began to dream again.

That sort of happy indifference in which he lived, that carelessness of a satisfied man, who has all his needs appeased slowly left him, and he felt vaguely that something was missing.

As he looked around his room, it seemed as though in the gathering shadows he saw the form of a woman whose presence seemed to soothe him.

It was so long since he had felt the impatience of a lover who awaits the return of a mistress, and suddenly he felt how far off his friend was, and wanted her near

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him with all the passion of a young man. He thought of how long they had loved each other; and he found in this vast room where she had come so often innumerable reminiscences of her — her ways — her words — her kisses. He recalled certain happy days, hours, and moments, and he seemed to feel around him the fondling of her old caresses. He got up and walked about, and thought again, that in spite of this friendship which had filled his life, he was always alone — always lonely.

After long, tedious hours of work, when he had put his brush and palette aside and looked around him dazed with the awakening of a man who enters again into life, he saw and felt only the cold walls, the inanimate objects.

Sometimes, in certain hours of tender emotion, he had suffered cruelly not to be able to take his sweetheart in his arms and keep her with him — then, as time went by and his ardor abated, he had accepted without revolt their separation, and his liberty. And now the regrets had come again, it was as though the old love was coming back. It was strange, this return of tenderness, enveloping him so abruptly almost without a cause, just because the spring had come and all was glorious again and possibly because he had heard his sweetheart's voice made young again. What small things can move a man's heart — a man who is getting old, and who remembers the happy past. As of old the wish to see her came strong upon him, his heart throbbed and sent the blood rushing warmly through his veins. He thought of her now as a young lover would, and felt impatient to see her. He would go

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and see her this evening, although they had met only in the morning. He would call and take a cup of tea with her.

The hours seemed long to him. As he walked from his home to the Boulevard Malesherbe, a sharp pain gripped him for fear she would not be at home, and he would have to pass the evening again alone,—*alone* as he had passed so many others.

At his inquiry: "Is the Countess at home?" the footman replying: "Yes, sir," his heart bounded with joy.

He stood for a moment on the threshold of the little *salon,* where the two women were working under the light of the rose pink lamp shades, a work-stand in English metal, covered with work, before them.

"Here I am again," he said gayly.

The Countess cried out:

"*You!* What luck!"

"*Oui, c'est moi.* I felt very lonely, and so I came."

"Ah! that is nice."

"Are you expecting anyone?"

"No! perhaps! . . . I never know." . . .

He sat down and looked disdainfully at the gray work in coarse wool that they were knitting with long wooden knitting needles.

"What is that?" he asked.

"Some coverlets."

"For the poor?"

"Of course."

"They are *very* ugly."

"They are *very* warm."

"Possibly, but they are ugly all the same, specially

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in a Louis XV room, where everything attracts the eye. You ought to make prettier gifts for your friends."

"*Mon Dieu!* how like a man," she said shrugging her shoulders." At this time, everyone is making this sort of coverlet."

"I know it only too well. One cannot call and see anyone of an evening without noticing these awful gray rags trailing across pretty dresses and dainty furniture; verily, this springtime you show poor taste in your charity."

To judge if what he said was true, the Countess spread out her work on the silk covered chairs at the side of her, then she said frankly:

"Yes! it really is very ugly," and she began to work again.

The pink light from the double chimney lamps, shed its rays on the two heads bent side by side over their work, the rosy glimmer creeping through their loosely waved hair and diffusing itself on their faces, their dresses, and their moving hands.

They looked lightly at their work, as women do who are well accustomed to needle work, using their fingers quickly — the eye following without the mind thinking. In each corner of the room stood four other lamps of Chinese porcelain, on old pedestals of carved gilt wood, which threw out over the silken hangings a clear, regular light, softened by the transparent lace thrown over the globes.

Bertin seated himself in a very low chair — a tiny armchair — in which he could just manage to sit, but he always preferred when chatting with the Countess to sit almost at her feet.

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"So you had a long walk with Nané in the park this afternoon," she said.

"Yes! we talked like old friends," he answered. "I like your daughter so much, she is very like you: When she is pronouncing certain phrases one would think you had forgotten your voice in her mouth."

"My husband has said that to me very often," she replied.

He looked at them working together bathed in the lamp-light, and the thought which made him suffer so often, which he had been suffering this same day came again — the loneliness of his silent, cold home — cold, no matter what weather, even when the fires were roaring in the grates, even when the bright summer sun shone in the room, the home was empty and cold — to-night as he looked at the two women, he felt the atmosphere of *the home* and his own solitude.

How much he would rather be this woman's husband than her lover. In the days gone by he had wanted so often to run off with her, to take her away from her husband, to steal her completely. To-day he was jealous of this man whom they had deceived, who was installed so near her, in the habits of her home, the contact of her touch, for always.

Looking at her to-night he felt his heart filled with the old love, and he wanted to tell her of this awakening, which would make her so happy; he was annoyed that Annette was there and hoped she would send the child to bed as soon as possible. He wanted to be alone with her, to get nearer to her and lay his head on her knees, take her hands in his, and put the coverlet for the poor, the wooden needles and the ball of wool, which had rolled under a chair — to one side.

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He looked at the clock again and again, and scarcely spoke. It was absurd to let a young girl pass the whole of the evening with her elders.

Footsteps broke the silence of the outer *salon* and the servant appeared in the doorway and announced:

"M. de Musadieu."

Olivier Bertin felt a repressed rage, and when he shook hands with the *Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts* he felt he would like to take him by the shoulders and throw him out again.

Musadieu was full of news: the ministry was going to fall, and there was a whispered scandal about the Marquis de Rocdiane.

"I will tell you all about it later on," he said looking towards Annette.

The Countess looked at the clock and saw that ten o'clock was going to strike.

"It is time to go to bed, my child," she said, turning to Annette.

Without replying Annette folded up her work, rolled up the ball of wool, kissed her mother on each cheek, shook hands with the men, and then quietly left the room.

"Now then, your scandal," said the Countess when the door had closed.

It appeared that the Marquis de Rocdiane, amicably separated from his wife, who allowed him an income which he considered insufficient, had found a sure and singular way to double it. At his orders she had been watched, and they had the surest proof of her guilt, so he had bought a larger income by the official report that had been made out by the *commissaire de police.*

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The Countess listened,— interested, her hands idle and her interrupted work on her lap.

Since Annette had left the room, Bertin had become quite exasperated with Musadieu. At this scandal, he turned on him fiercely, and affirmed with the indignation of a man who would not speak to any one of such a calumny — that it was an odious lie, one of those shameful back-biting tales that people ought not to repeat, or even to listen to.

He was standing with his back to the fireplace, in the threatening attitude of a man who is disposed to make of the story a personal question.

Rocdiane was his friend, and, if, in certain respects, one could reproach him with levity one could not accuse him, or even suspect him of any action that was really criminal.

Musadieu was surprised at this attack. He tried to vindicate himself, collected his thoughts and commenced excuses.

"Pardon me," he said; "but I heard it mentioned just now at the Duchess de Mortemain's."

"Who told you? A woman, I suppose," said Bertin.

"No! it was not, it was the Marquis de Farandal."

"Bah! it doesn't surprise me, coming from him," said the painter.

There was a silence. The Countess took up her work. Then Olivier continued in a calmer voice:

"I *know* that it is false."

Musadieu was preparing for a retreat, feeling that he had trodden on dangerous ground, and he was just saying that he had a visit to make at the Corbelles, when M. de Guilleroy came in, having just returned from a dinner *en ville*.

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Bertin sat down despairingly. It was impossible to get rid of the husband as soon as he came in, and Musadieu — bah!

"Have you heard about this awful scandal?" commenced M. de Guilleroy.

No one replied.

"It appears," he continued, "that Rocdiane surprised his wife in a criminal act, and is making her pay dearly for the indiscretion."

Then Bertin, with a disconsolate air, and with grief in his voice and manner, laid a hand on Guilleroy's knee, and repeated in a quieter tone the words he had just flung in Musadieu's face. And the Count almost convinced, was annoyed to think that he had related so lightly, such a serious and compromising thing. He pleaded his ignorance and innocence. As he said, one heard so many tales that were absolutely false and wicked; they all agreed that the world surmises and calumniates with deplorable facility, and all four were of the opinion that most of the tales whispered about, were lies,— that women never had the lovers that one supposed, and that men never committed the infamies that were credited to them, and that on the surface everything was much uglier than beneath.

Since Guilleroy had appeared on the scene, Bertin felt that he had no real grudge against Musadieu, so he drew him into the conversation again and said a few flattering things to him which opened the sluice of his eloquence; and the Count seemed contented, like a man who brings with him peace and cordiality.

Two servants came into the room carrying a tea-table and boiling water steaming in a pretty brass tea kettle, over the blue flame of a spirit lamp. The

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Countess got up and made the tea, preparing it with the same care and attention as the Russians, then she offered a cup to Musadieu, another to Bertin and passed round plates of *foies gras* sandwiches, and small Austrian and English pastries.

M. de Guilleroy walked up to the tea-table which held also a row of bottles containing various cordials and syrups. He made himself a stiff grog and discreetly disappeared in the next room.

Once more Bertin found he had only to deal with Musadieu, and once more he wanted to push him outside. He had recovered his nerve, and was holding forth again, scattering anecdotes, repeating talk, and jokes. The painter kept his eyes on the clock, whose hands were approaching midnight. Madame de Guilleroy saw his look and understood. She showed the tact of a woman of the world, who can quickly and imperceptibly change the tone of a light conversation and the general atmosphere of the room, and make it understood without words, that one should go or stay. By her manner only, by the look on her face and the weariness of her eyes, she spread a chilliness around her, as though she had just opened a window.

Musadieu felt the draught of cold air cooling his ideas, and without asking himself why he suddenly thought it was time to go, he got up.

Bertin, by good breeding, followed his example and the two men walked across the *salons* followed by the Countess who continued chatting to the artist. At the entrance of the hall she detained him a moment to explain something, while Musadieu was helped into his coat by a footman. As Madame de Guilleroy was still

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speaking with Bertin the *Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts* having waited a few minutes at the door leading on to the staircase, which was held open to him by another domestic, decided to go out alone, rather than stand face to face with a valet.

The door closed gently behind him, and Madame de Guilleroy said to the artist in a perfectly natural manner:

"But why are you in such a hurry? It is not yet midnight. Won't you stay a little longer?"

And together they walked back to the little *salon.*

As soon as they were seated, he said:

"*Dieu!* how that animal annoys me."

"But why?"

"He takes you away from me."

"Oh! not very much."

"But he irritates me."

"You are jealous."

"It is not being jealous to find a man a bore."

He had seated himself again in the little armchair, and was quite near to her now; he held a piece of the lace on her gown between his fingers, and he told her of the strong emotion he had felt all the afternoon and evening.

She listened to him surprised and delighted, and laid her hand gently on his white hair, which she stroked softly as though to thank him.

"I would like so much to live always with you, Any," he murmured. He thought of her husband who had gone to bed, sleeping without doubt in the room that led out of hers.

"There is only marriage that can unite two lives," he said.

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"*Mon pauvre ami,*" she said full of pity for him, and also for herself.

He had laid his cheek on her knees and was looking up at her tenderly; in his tenderness there was mingled a shade of melancholy and sorrow, he had less ardor than a while ago, when he was separated from her by her daughter, husband, and Musadieu.

She ran her slim fingers through his hair, and said with a smile:

"*Dieu!* how white you are, your last black hairs have gone."

"Alas! I know it. They go quickly," he said.

Afraid that she had saddened him, she said:

"Oh! but you were gray when you were quite young, since I have known you, it has always been a pepper and salt shade."

"Yes! that is true."

So as to efface the shade of regret that she had provoked, she raised his head between her two hands, and gave him two slow, tender kisses on the forehead, those long kisses which seem as though they could never finish. Then they looked into each other's eyes trying to see in the depths the reflection of their love.

"How I should like to pass the whole day with you, dear."

He felt vaguely tormented by this inexplicable need of friendship.

Only a short while ago he thought that if the others would leave them, and he could be alone with her that it would be sufficient to realize this desire which had awakened since the morning, and now that he was alone with his mistress and could feel on his forehead

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How white you are, your last black hairs have gone.

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the warmth of her hands and through her dress the warmth of her body, he still felt the same disquietude, the same longing for this unknown and fleeting love. So he thought perhaps outside the house, in the woods perhaps, where they could be quite alone this turmoil of his heart would be satisfied and calmed.

"What a child you are," she said, "why, we see each other every day."

He begged her to arrange some way to have luncheon with him outside Paris, somewhere in the country, as they had done several times before.

She was surprised at this caprice which was so difficult to realize now that her daughter had returned. She would try however, for her husband was going to Roncière, but it could not be until after the *Vernissage* which would take place the following Saturday.

"And from now to then," he said, "when shall I see you?"

"To-morrow night at the Corbelles. And if you are free on Thursday, come here at 3 o'clock, then I think we shall be able to dine together on Friday with the Duchess.

"It is understood then."

He got up to go.

"Adieu, Any."

"Adieu, *mon ami.*"

He stayed beside her, standing up, as though he could not decide to go, for he had wanted to say so much to her, and had hardly found anything to say.

"Adieu," he said again taking both her hands in his.

"Adieu, mon ami."

"I love you," he said.

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She gave him one of those smiles, where in a second a woman can show to a man all that she has given up for him.

With heart beating, he repeated for the third time. "Adieu." And then left her.

CHAPTER IV

IT seemed as though all the carriages in Paris were making a pilgrimage to the *Palais de l' Industrie.* Since nine o'clock in the morning they had been arriving from all routes by the streets, avenues, and bridges towards this market of the *Beaux-Arts* where the *Tout Paris artiste* had invited the *Tout-Paris mondain* to assist at the first day of the opening of the Salon,—the exhibition of 3,400 pictures.

The tail end of a crowd was pushing through the doors, and disdaining the sculpture, was hurrying above to the gallery of painting.

In the square *salon* there was a swarm of noisy people. The painters *en représentation* until the evening made themselves known by their activity, the loudness of their voices and the authority of their manner. They began by pulling their friends by the sleeve towards the pictures, which they described with great flourishing of their arms, exclamations, and the energetic mimicry of connoisseurs.

There were all sorts of artists — big men of ungainly forms, with long hair and wearing soft gray or black hats. Others were small, active, thin — or thick-set, with loosely knotted foulard ties, a jacket suit or sacked up in those odd sort of suits which are characteristic of a certain class of artist.

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There was a clique of distinguished artists,— artists of the boulevards, the clan of the academies, decorated with red rosettes, some large, some microscopic, according to their conception of good taste and *bon ton.* Then the clan of the *bourgeois* painters, the father surrounded with his family like a triumphal choir.

On entering the square *salon,* where the pictures that had been admitted to the honor of this room were hung, the eyes were dazzled by the brilliancy of color. The full light streaming from above brought out the radiancy of their tones, the glitter of the frames and showed up a crudity of new colors under the glaze of the varnish.

The portrait of the President of the Republic was opposite the door, while on another wall was a general decked out with gold lace, wearing a hat trimmed with ostrich plumes, and pantaloons of red cloth; at the side some naked nymphs under a weeping willow; and a ship in distress almost engulfed by a wave; an ancient priest excommunicating a barbarous king; a street of the Orient full of rotting dead; and a shadow of Dante on a visit to hell. Then again in this immense room one sees a charge of cavalry; some sharp-shooters in a wood; cows in the pasture lands; two lords of the XIX century fighting a duel at the corner of a street; a crazy woman sitting on a mile-stone; a priest administering the last sacrament to a dying man; some reapers; some rivers; a setting sun; a moonlight night; in fact a sample of everything that an artist makes, that he has made, and that he will make, up to the last day of the world.

Olivier stood in the midst of a group of celebrated artists, members of the Institute and the Jury, exchang-

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ing opinions with them. An uneasiness oppressed him, an anxiety as regards the picture he had exhibited, which, in spite of the congratulations he had received, he did not feel was a success.

He left the group of men and went quickly forward. The Duchess de Mortemain had just arrived.

"Is the Countess here?" she asked him.

"I have not seen her yet."

"And M. de Musadieu?"

"No! I think not."

"He promised me that at ten o'clock he would be at the top of the staircase to escort me through the rooms," she said.

"Will you allow me to replace him?" Bertin asked.

"No! No! Your friends need you. We will see you later on. I believe we are having luncheon together."

Musadieu came hurrying up. He had been detained several minutes at the statuary, and excused himself. He was breathless, as he said:

"This way Duchess, we will go by here, beginning at the right. Come along."

They disappeared in a whirl of heads, as Madame de Guilleroy holding her daughter's arm, came in looking for Olivier Bertin.

He saw them and joined them at once.

"*Dieu!* how pretty you both look. Really Annette is improving. She has changed a lot in eight days," he said. He looked at her with an observing eye, then added:

"The lines are softer, more blended, the complexion is more brilliant. She is already much less of a little girl and much more of a *Parisienne.*"

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"Let us commence to the right," he said, "and we will join the Duchess."

The Countess who was *au courant* on all matters relating to paintings, and as interested as an exhibitor asked:

"What is the general opinion?"

"Splendid *Salon!* A remarkable Bonnat, two excellent works by Carolus Duran; an admirable one by Puvis de Chavannes; a Rool, marvelous and very new; a Gervex, exquisite; and a lot of others, Béraud, Carzin, Duez, in fact a cup full of good things."

"And yours?" she said.

"They have paid me compliments, but I am not pleased with my work."

"You never are."

"Yes! sometimes, but, to-day, really I think I have reason."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Let us go and see it first," she said.

They made their way to his picture — two little country girls bathing in a stream,— and found an admiring group standing before it.

"It is exquisite. A perfect jewel," exclaimed the Countess. "You have never done anything better."

He drew closer to her, gratified for each word of praise, which calmed him, and seemed to heal a wound.

And some rapid reasonings ran through his mind, convincing him that she was right.

As he argued, she understood, and saw correctly with the eye of an intelligent Parisian. He forgot in reassuring himself that for twelve years he had justly reproached her for admiring too much the affected

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style of the languid *élégantes*, the sentiments expressed, the false shades of the mode — and not the art — art alone, art free from ideas, tendencies, and worldly prejudices.

"Let us continue," he said, and they moved on. For a long time he took them from room to room, pointing out the best canvases and explaining the subjects. He was happy with them and made happy by them.

Suddenly the Countess asked:

"What time is it?"

"Twelve thirty."

"Oh! come quickly, we must go to luncheon. The Duchess is to meet us at Ledoyen's, where she told me to bring you, if we do not find her in the rooms."

The restaurant standing in the midst of a group of trees and shrubs was crowded. The murmur of confused voices, of calls, the clinking of glasses and plates, came through the window and the large opened doors. The closely packed tables with people sitting eating at them, were arranged in long rows, to the right and to the left of the straight passage, where the *garçons* ran, bewildered, excited, carrying plates filled with meat, vegetables, fish and fruit. Under the circular gallery there was such a multitude of men and women that one might have said it was a living party.

Everyone laughed, talked, drank, ate and became gay from the effects of the wine; they were over-flowing with that joyousness which a bright, sunshiny day lets fall upon Paris. The *garçon* led the Countess, Annette and Bertin into a reserved private dining-room, where the Duchess was waiting for them.

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On entering the room the first thing the painter saw was the Marquis de Farandal beside his aunt, eager and smiling, holding out his arms to receive the Countess' and her daughter's wraps. He felt so annoyed at this simple courtesy, that it was with difficulty that he refrained from saying something rude to the youth. The Duchess explained meeting her nephew and the departure of Musadieu, who was called away by the minister of the *Beaux-Arts*. As Bertin thought that this handsome, insipid Marquis would marry Annette, that he had come here to see her, that he looked upon her already as his future wife, he became more unnerved and thoroughly exasperated. It seemed as if someone had stolen his rights — some mysterious and sacred rights.

As soon as they were seated at the table, the Marquis sitting next to Annette, occupied himself with her, with that eager air of a man who has a full authority and right to pay attention. He looked curiously at her, in a way that seemed to the painter too bold and inquisitive. He wore a satisfied and almost tender smile. In his manner and words there appeared already that decisive attitude that one adopts, when one makes the announcement of a near prize of possession.

The Duchess and Countess looked at him with approval, they were delighted that he had voluntarily accepted the rôle of a fiancé, and they glanced at each other with a pleased and meaning look.

As soon as luncheon was over, they all returned to the Exhibition. The place was so crowded now, that it was almost impossible to get inside the rooms; the heat of humanity, and that stale odor of dresses and cloaks that have been worn some time, made the atmosphere

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suffocating and heavy. People no longer looked at the pictures, but at the faces and gowns, everyone seemed to be looking about for someone he knew. After five minutes Olivier and Madame de Guilleroy found themselves separated from the rest. He wanted to look for them but she held his arm, saying: "We are alright, leave them alone. It was understood if we lost each other, we should all meet at the buffet at four o'clock."

"That is true," he said. But he felt annoyed at the idea that the marquis was with Annette, he was so affected and absurd with his fatuous gallantry.

The Countess murmured: "You love me always?"

"Why! yes, certainly," he replied with a preoccupied air. And he looked over the multitude of heads to see if he could see M. de Farandal's gray hat.

Seeing that he was absent-minded, and wishing to bring back his thoughts, she said: "Oh! if you knew how I adore your picture this year. It is your masterpiece!"

He smiled, and suddenly forgot the young people, and remembered only his anxiety of the morning.

"Really? You think so?"

"Yes! I prefer it to any you have done."

"I have not been at all contented with it."

With caressing words she wreathed fresh laurels around him, knowing well, since a long time, that nothing is so powerful with an artist as tender and continued flattery. Re-animated and cheered up by her kind words, he commenced to talk with her, only seeing her, hearing only her voice in the great moving chaos of humanity.

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"How I would love to kiss you," he whispered as he looked down at her.

A warm blush overspread her cheeks, and looking at him with shining eyes she said: "Then you do love me still."

And he replied with the intonation she wanted and which she had not heard when she asked the question before.

"Yes! I love you, Any dear."

"Come then to see me of an evening," she said, "now that my daughter has returned I do not go out much. If I could keep you with me always, how I would spoil you. Come oftener of an evening. Promise."

"I promise," he said.

A voice close to her ear said: "Mamma."

The Countess started, and turning round, saw Annette, the Duchess, and her nephew joining them.

"It is four o'clock," said the Duchess, "I am very tired and I want to go home."

"I don't care to stay longer, I am quite ready to leave," replied the Countess.

They reached the interior staircase which separates the galleries where the drawings and water colors are hung, and which dominates the immense glass-roofed gardens where the sculpture is exhibited.

As Bertin wished them "Good-bye" at the door, Madame de Guilleroy asked in a low voice:

"You will come this evening, then?"

"Yes."

Then he returned to the Exhibition to talk with the other artists upon their impressions of the day.

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The painters and sculptors stood in groups around the statues, before the buffet, here, there and everywhere; they were disputing like they do every year, in sustaining or attacking the same ideas. Olivier Bertin who usually became animated in these disputes — making a specialty of repartee, and of disconcerting attacks, and also having a reputation as an intellectual theorist, of which he was justly proud — tried to get up an interest in the arguments, but it was no use, he was absent-minded and had no wish to listen to what they were saying or to understand it. Although he liked to argue and put forth his theories, he was in no mood for these debates to-day. He had forgotten the annoyance he had felt in the morning concerning his picture, and could think only of the Marquis always near to Annette. What did it matter to him after all? Why did he wish to stop this marriage which would be so advantageous to both? But no reasoning in the world could efface the displeased impression which had seized him when he saw Farandal speak and smile in the way he did, when looking in the young girl's face.

When he called on the Countess in the evening, she was alone with her daughter; they were again knitting under the lamp-light the coverlet for the poor. It was with difficulty that he refrained from saying something rude and sarcastic about the Marquis, he wanted to show up to Annette the conceit and vulgarity that was hidden under his polished manner.

He had got into the habit of not putting himself out to be entertaining when he made these after-dinner calls; he was an old friend and felt like one of the family, he would lie back in the lounge chair, and would dream, or talk, or go half to sleep as he reposed in

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this tranquil intimacy. But now, to-night, he felt all the eagerness and energy of a man who wants to please; his talk was brilliant, he whipped up his high spirits, and when he heard the Countess and her child laugh gayly, or when he saw that they were moved, and they put down their work to listen to him, he felt a thrill of satisfaction which paid him for his trouble.

Every evening when he knew them to be alone he came, and never had he passed such happy evenings.

Madame de Guilleroy, always tormented with the fear that he might want to marry, exerted every effort to make him happy and comfortable in her home; seeing that he preferred to call and see them, instead of going to the club or theater, she refused invitations to dinners, balls, and receptions, just to have the happiness of throwing in the telegraph box as she went out of an afternoon the little blue telegram which said: "This Evening."

At first, when he used to look at the clock every minute, she wished to give him as quickly as possible the tête-à-tête that he seemed so much to desire, and so sent Annette to bed at ten o'clock, and then seeing one day that he was surprised, and hearing him say laughingly that Annette ought not to be treated as though she were a naughty little girl, she gave her a quarter of an hour's grace, then half an hour, then an hour.

He did not stay long after the girl had wished them "Good night"; it seemed as if the half of the charm which drew him to this house went with her. As soon as she had gone he would take up his usual attitude at the Countess' feet, sitting on the little low chair quite close to her and from time to time lay his cheek

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against her knees, and hold her hand in his, then his high spirits falling suddenly, he would cease to speak, and seemed to repose in a tender silence from the efforts that he had made.

Little by little she began to understand with a woman's instinct, that Annette attracted him almost as much as she did, but she was not hurt, it made her happy to think that he could find between them both, something of the family life of which she felt she had deprived him, and so she imprisoned him more than ever between them both, playing *à la maman,* so that he could feel almost a father to her little girl, and thinking that this new shade of sentiment would add to the pleasure which brought him to her house. Her wish to be attractive in his eyes was ever present, but her anxiety was now great, for she was beginning to feel on all sides, like a prick as yet almost imperceptible, the innumerable advances of age; and so she struggled on with her coquetry, and took more strenuous measures. To become as slim as Annette, she continued not to drink at her meals, and gradually, by careful and incessant efforts she regained the straight, slim figure of her younger days, so much so, that from the back, when they were walking together, it was difficult to tell one from the other. But her face being made thinner resented this *régime,* the skin that had been stretched out, wrinkled and took a yellowish tint, which showed to better advantage her daughter's youthful freshness, so she had to resort to the "*petits soins*" for her face as an actress does. Although these remedies by daylight made her complexion a little suspicious, by lamp light she had that charming and

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artificial brilliancy which gives to women who use cosmetic a matchless complexion.

The arresting of this decline and the use of artificial means, modified her habits. She avoided as much as possible the comparisons in full daylight, and sought them by lamp light, as it gave her an advantage. When she felt tired and pale and older than usual, she would have convenient headaches which excused her attending the balls and theaters; and the days when she felt that she was at her best she triumphed and played the rôle of big sister, but always with the grave modesty of a mother. Then so as to wear dresses almost like her daughter's, she would dress Annette in gowns that were a little too serious for her, and Annette, whose character was becoming more brilliant and gay, wore them with a sparkling vivacity which made her prettier than ever. She lent herself with all her heart to making her beautiful mother as young and attractive as she could, and instinctively played with her the little scenes of grace that showed her most to advantage; instinctively she knew *when* to embrace her, *when* to put her arm around her waist with tenderness, and to show by a movement, a caress, by some ingenious invention how pretty they both were, and what little difference there was between them.

Of this resemblance with one so natural, with the other so ardently striven for, there was born in the mind and in the heart of the painter, the singular impression of a double being, old and new, one part so well-known and the other almost ignored; the two bodies, made one after the other with the same flesh,—it was the continuance of the same woman made

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younger, and become as she once had been. And he lived near them, shared his heart between the two, feeling for the mother the awakened passion, and for the daughter an obscure tenderness.

PART SECOND

CHAPTER I

July 20th, Paris, 11 o'clock.

Mon Ami:

My mother has just died at Roncières. We are taking the midnight train. Do not come. We have told no one. Pity me, and think of me.

YOUR ANY.

21st, July, Mid-day.

Ma Pauvre Amie:

I should have started in spite of you, if I were not in the habit of considering all your wishes as orders. Since yesterday I have thought of you incessantly, with a keen sorrow. I thought of the silent journey that you made at night with your child and your husband in the half-lit railway carriage that was carrying you to your dead. I saw you all three under the feeble oily lamps, you crying, and Annette sobbing. I saw your arrival at the station, the long drive in the carriage, your entrance to the château, where the servants awaited you, your flight up the staircase, towards the room, towards the bed on which she laid, your first look at her, and your kiss on her thin, peaceful face, and I thought of your heart, the half of which belongs to me, and I know how it is suffering, and how it stifles

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you. This thought of your grief pains me so much.

I kiss your poor tearful eyes, my darling, with love and pity.

OLIVIER.

Mon Ami:

If anything could have given me happiness at this sad moment, it was your letter. It did me good. We buried mother yesterday, and since her poor inanimate body went out of this house, it seems that I am alone in the world. One loves one's mother almost without knowing it, without feeling it, because it is as natural as living. And one does not know the depths of the roots of this love, until the moment of the last separation. No other affection can be compared with it, because all others are from accidental meetings; but this is of our birth. The others come to us later by the chances of life, but this lives since our first day, it is in our very blood. And then it is not only a mother that one loses, it is our childhood itself, which has half disappeared, for our little lives of babyhood belonged as much to her as to ourselves. She is the only one who knows it as we do, she knows all the little insignificant and dear things, which were the first sweet emotions of our young hearts. Only to my mother could I say "Do you remember that, mother, the day when? . . . Do you remember, mother, my pretty china doll that grand-mamma gave me?" We talked together, and made long and dear chaplets of small memories which no one on the earth knows now but I. So you see, mon ami, it is a part of myself that is dead, the oldest part and the best. I have lost the poor heart where the little girl that I was still lived.

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Now no one knows her, no one can remember the little Anne, her baby dresses, her laughs, her ways. And a day will come, perhaps it is not so far off, when it will be my turn to go, leaving alone my little Annette, like mother has left me. How sad it is, how hard and cruel; when we are well and happy we never think of Death, we do not look around and see it taking someone at every instant, as it will take us soon. If we saw Death, and thought of it, if one were not careless and gay, and blinded by all the frivolity that passes before us, we could not live, for the sight of this massacre without end would drive us mad.

I am so crushed and hopeless, that I have no strength left. Day and night I think of mother, nailed in that box, beneath the damp earth, out there alone in the field, under the rain, and her sweet old face, which I used to kiss with so much love, nothing but a frightful putrefaction. How terrible it is, mon ami! how terrible! When I lost my father I was only just married and I did not feel the things as I feel them to-day. Yes! pity me, think of me, and write to me. I need you so much at this moment.

ANNE.

Ma Pauvre Amie:

Your grief hurts me terribly, and I no longer see life *en rose*. Since you left I feel lost. I am without inclinations, without refuge. Everything tires, annoys, and irritates me. I am thinking always of you and Annette, and you are both so far away when I need you near me so much, ah! so much. It is extraordinary how far away you seem to me, and how I miss you.

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Never, even in the days when I was young, were you *all* to me as you are at this moment. For a long time I have felt this *crise* which must be the sunstroke of Indian Summer. That what I am feeling is so strange that I must tell you. Just imagine, since you went, I feel that I cannot go out. Before, and even during the last months, you know I liked to go out on the boulevards. I was amused by the people and the things I saw, I tasted of the joy of seeing and the pleasure of walking, I went about, not caring where, just to walk, breathe and dream. I can no longer do it. As soon as I go in the streets an agony oppresses me, like the fear of a blind man who has lost the dog that guides him. I become worried like a traveler who has lost the trace of the footpath in a dense wood, and I have to return to my home. Paris seems to me empty, odious, bewildering; I cannot go for walks now, so I go to my club. And do you know why I am able to go there? because you are not part of it in any way. When I knew you were in Paris, I was almost sure to meet you somewhere, it was possible to see you at the first turn of the avenue. I could go anywhere, because you might be anywhere, and if I did not meet you, I might at least meet Annette, who is an emanation of you — one or the other — there was always the hope of seeing, it might be that you were coming towards me from afar, or it might be that I was following you and would soon overtake you. Now there is no one. Paris is empty for me.

You will think I am very selfish, my poor darling, to speak thus of the solitude of an old, maudlin bachelor, when you are crying such sorrowful tears. Pardon me,

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mon amie, I am so used to being spoilt by you that I cry: Help! Help! when you are no longer with me. All my love.

OLIVIER.

Mon Ami:

Thank you for your letter. I have so much need to know that you love me. I am passing through some terrible days, it seemed that the grief would kill me in my turn. It was like a block of agony closed in my bosom which got larger and larger, almost strangling and suffocating me. The doctor whom they called in to cure the nervous attacks which I had, four or five times a day, injected morphine; it nearly drove me mad, and the great heat which we are having aggravated my condition, throwing me into a state of excessive excitement bordering on delirium; but I have felt calmer since the terrible storm on Friday. I must tell you that since the day of the burial, I had not cried at all, I could not, and then during the storm whose approach agitated me terribly, I suddenly felt the tears beginning to fall from my eyes — slow, small, burning tears. Oh! these first tears! how they hurt! they tore my heart as though they were claws, and they tightened my throat so that I could not breathe. Then they came quicker, larger, and cooler; they fell from my eyes like a stream, and there came so many — so many that my handkerchief was soaked, and I had to take another; then that great block of grief seemed to get smaller, to melt, to flow from my eyes. From that time I cried from morning till night, and it has saved me. One ends by going mad, or one dies if one cannot cry. I am lonely also, my husband is making

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his rounds in the country, and I asked him to take Annette with him; it diverts and consoles her a little, poor child. They go in the carriage or on horseback eight or ten *lieues* from Roncières, and in spite of her sadness she comes back to me with rosy cheeks, and her eyes sparkling with life, all animated from the country air and the gallop she has had. How beautiful it is to be that age. I think we shall stay here for another fifteen days or three weeks, and then, although it will be the month of August, we shall return to Paris for the reason that you know so well. I send you all my heart that remains.

ANY.

August 4th, Paris.

I can bear it no longer, Any. You must come back or something will happen. I ask myself if I am not sick, for I am so disgusted with my work and everything else. First of all it is very warm in Paris, so much so that every night is a bath of eight or nine hours. When I get up I feel depressed by the fatigue of this sleep in a sweating-room, and then I walk up and down for an hour or two before a white canvas, wanting to design something on it; but I have nothing in my mind, my eye, or my hand. I am no longer a painter, this useless effort towards work is exasperating, I have had models come, have placed them, but as they give me poses, movements and expressions that I have painted to satiety, I have made them dress themselves again and told them to be off.

Really there is nothing that I can see new, and I suffer as though I were going blind. What is it? Fatigue of the eye, or the brain? the draining of the

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artist's faculties? or a break down of the optic nerves? Does one know? it seems to me that I have finished unveiling the unexplored corner that was given me to unveil. I do not see more now than what everybody sees. I make what all the poor artists have made. I have only the vision and the observation of the ordinary painter. Formerly, not so very long ago, the number of new subjects appeared to me unlimited, and I had such a variety of ways to express them that the *embarras du choix* made me hesitate. Then, all of a sudden, this glimpse of a world of subjects is gone, my investigations have become useless and sterile. The people I see have no sense for me, and I no longer find in human beings the character and the soul that I liked so much to discern and render apparent; however, I think that I might be able to make a very good portrait of your daughter. Is it because she resembles you so much, that I confuse you both in my thoughts? Perhaps.

Then after forcing myself to draw a man and a woman who are original types, I decide to go out and have luncheon somewhere, for I have no longer the courage to sit alone in my dining-room.

The Boulevard Malesherbes looks like an avenue of a forest imprisoned in a deserted town. All the houses are empty, the *arroseurs* flood the pavements with water, splashing everywhere on the wooden walks which exhale a vapor of wet tar; and from one end to the other of the long incline from the Parc Monceau to Saint-Augustin, you see perhaps five or six black forms, people of no importance — tradespeople and servants. The black shadows spread out on the burning sidewalks at the foot of the trees and make odd spots that

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look like dried liquid; the stillness of the leaves on the branches and their gray shadows on the asphalt express the state of this burning town, the whole city is sleeping and perspiring in the manner of a workman, who, tired out, falls asleep on a bench and sweats in the blazing sun. I think of the lovely fresh mornings in your orchards, full of little wild flowers, which give the air the taste of honey. Then I go, already disgusted, into a restaurant where I see bald-headed, fat men eating; their waistcoats unbuttoned and foreheads damp with perspiration, they sit there eating their luncheon in a dejected manner. All the food is warm, the melon melted upon the ice, damp bread, flabby fillet of beef, re-cooked vegetables, purulent cheese; overripe fruit — and I come away feeling a nausea, and I return to my home to try and sleep a little until the hour for dinner, which I take at the club. There I always find Adelmans, Maldant and Rocdiane, Landa and others who bore me to death. After having yawned as many times as there are minutes between eight o'clock and midnight, I go home to bed and undress thinking that it is all going to recommence tomorrow.

Yes! *ma chère amie,* I am at the age when a bachelor's life becomes intolerable, because there is nothing left under the sun that is new for me. A bachelor should be young, eager and gay; when one is no longer that, it is dangerous for him to have his liberty. *Dieu!* how I once loved my liberty, that was before I loved you better. How it weighs on me to-day. *La liberté* for an old bachelor like I am is an empty space, empty everywhere; it is the road of the dead without anything in it preventing us from seeing the end. The question

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I ask myself always is: What shall I do? Whom shall I go to see so as not to be alone? and I go from comrade to comrade, from hand-shake to hand-shake, begging a little friendship. I gather up the crumbs which do not make a slice. Ah! *You!* I have you my dear friend, but you do not belong to me. It is perhaps from you that this anguish comes, for it is the desire for your touch, your presence, to have the same roof over our heads, the same walls surrounding us, the same interests holding our hearts, the need of this communion of hopes, griefs, pleasures, gayety, sadness, and also of material things, which causes me so much anxiety. You *are* mine, that is to say, I can steal a little of you from time to time, but I would like to always breathe the same air that you are breathing, share everything with you, only use things that belong to us both, feel that all that I have is yours as much as mine, the glass from which I drink, the divan on which I rest, the bread that I eat, and the fire that warms me.

Adieu, return to me quickly, I am too unhappy away from you.

OLIVIER.

Mon Ami:

I am sick and so weary that you would not recognize me. I think I have cried too much, I must stay here a little longer, and rest before coming back to you, because I would not like you to see me as I am. My husband starts for Paris the day after to-morrow, and will give you all the news. He wants you to dine with him somewhere, and tells me to ask you to wait for him at your home at seven o'clock.

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As for myself, as soon as I feel a little better, as soon as my face alters — it looks as though I had risen from the dead and makes me afraid of myself — I shall return to you. I also have only you and Annette now in all the world, and I want to offer to each of you all that I can give without robbing the other.

I would like to have you kiss my eyes which have cried so much.

ANNE.

When Olivier Bertin received this letter saying that their return was put off again, he had an immoderate wish to take a carriage and start off at once to the station and take the train to Roncières, then remembering that M. de Guilleroy would be back the next day, he became more resigned, and began to desire the arrival of the husband with almost as much impatience as if it were the wife herself. Never had he liked Guilleroy more than during these twenty-four hours of waiting.

When he came in he rushed up to him with outstretched hands crying:

"Ah! *mon cher!* How pleased I am to see you." The other one seemed also very satisfied, but contented above all to return to Paris, for the life in Normandy for three weeks had not been very gay for him.

The two men sat down on a little *tête-à-tête* sofa in a corner of the studio under a canopy of oriental silks, and once more they clasped each other's hands and seemed quite moved at meeting each other again.

"And the Countess," asked the artist, "how is she?"

"Oh! not very well," replied Guilleroy. "Her

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mother's death affected her greatly, and she is getting better very slowly indeed. In fact, I am a little anxious about her."

"Why doesn't she come back?"

"I don't know. I tried to persuade her but it was no use."

"What does she do every day?"

"*Mon Dieu!* She cries, she is thinking always of her mother, it is not good for her. I want her very much to have a change of air, to quit the place where all this has passed, you can understand that."

"And Annette?"

"Oh! she — a lovely rose."

Olivier smiled joyfully and he asked: "Did she suffer much grief?"

"Yes! indeed, the poor child was dreadfully unhappy, but you know the grief of eighteen years soon passes."

After a short silence Guilleroy said: "*Eh! bien!* My dear fellow where are we going to dine to-night? I want to see something lively, I want to hear some noise and see some movement, I have stagnated down there, and want brightening up a bit."

"Well then, what do you say to the *Café des Ambassadeurs,* at this season I don't think we can do better than go there."

"Right you are! Anywhere for me if there's some life." And they started off arm in arm towards the Champs-Elysées, Guilleroy exhilarated with the keen joy of a Parisian who returns to his own city.

The evening was oppressive. The heavy sky seemed to weigh over the town, and on the wide Avenue des Champs-Elysées where one could hear the lively

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strains of the orchestra as it opened the nightly concert.

The two men seated on the balcony of the *Café des Ambassadeurs* could see below the empty benches and chairs of the railed-off enclosure, right up to the little theater where the singers in the palish light of the electric globes and daylight blended, were displaying their gaudy bespangled toilets and the pink tints of their flesh. The odors of fried eatables, of sauces, and warm food floated on the imperceptible breeze, mingling with the perfume of the chestnut blossoms as it was wafted over the avenue, and when a woman passed looking for the seat that had been reserved for her, followed by a man in evening dress, leaving in her wake the intoxicating and strong scent of her gown and her body, Guilleroy became radiant and murmured:

"Ah! Ah! *mon vieux,* I prefer to be here than at Roncières."

"And I," replied Bertin, "prefer to be there than here."

"*Allons donc!*"

"Yes! really I would. Paris seems disgusting this summer."

"Never mind, it is always Paris, and there's no place like it."

The deputy seemed to be living in a day of contentment, one of those rare days of effervescent sprightliness when a serious-minded man is likely to do very foolish things.

He looked at two *cocottes,* elaborately dressed and be-jeweled who were dining at the next table with three thin young men, superlatively correct, and he questioned Olivier slyly on all the well-known and question-

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able girls, whom he daily heard spoken about. Then he murmured in a tone of deep regret:

"You are a lucky dog to have remained a bachelor; you can do and see so many things."

But the artist vehemently protested, and like all those who have thoughts to torment them, he took Guilleroy into his confidence and told him of his troubles and his lonely solitude. When he had told him all, enumerating right to the end of the litany of his melancholies, and told him artlessly, as a man impelled by the need of relieving his heart, how much he had longed for love in his home, and the rustling of a woman's garments always at his side, the Count, in his turn, admitted that there was something really good in marriage, after all. Then refinding his parliamentary eloquence, he spoke of the joys of his own domestic life, he spoke in the highest praise of the Countess, her thoughtfulness and kindness for every one under his roof, from himself to the lowest menial, her love and devotion to their daughter, he spoke of her charm and beauty and how everyone loved her, and Olivier showed his approval by gravely nodding his head at frequent intervals.

Happy to hear her thus spoken of, but jealous of this intimate joy that Guilleroy extolled as his right and duty the painter finished by saying with sincere conviction:

"*You!* if anyone has been lucky you have, you are the most fortunate man I know."

The deputy pleased and flattered admitted that he certainly was a most fortunate being after all, and said:

"I should like to see her back. Really I am feeling very anxious about her. Look here, old man, you say you are bored in Paris, why don't you run down to

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Roncieres and bring her back? She will listen to you because you are her best friend, while a husband. . . . Well, you know. . . . "

Olivier was delighted.

"I want nothing better than that," he said, "and yet . . . don't you think it might annoy her to have me arrive like that?"

"Not at all! Not the least bit. No! No! You go, *mon cher!*"

"I consent then. I shall start to-morrow by the one o'clock train. Shall I send her a telegram?"

"No! I'll see about that. I will let her know, so that she will be able to send a carriage to meet you at the station."

And as they had finished their dinner they walked off up the boulevards, but at the end of half an hour the Count quite suddenly left the painter, under the pretext of some very urgent business that he had forgotten to arrange.

CHAPTER II

THE Countess and her daughter were just sitting down to luncheon in the large dining-room at Roncières. Both were dressed in deepest mourning.

Ancestral portraits, ingenuously painted, hung upon the walls,— one long-lost ancestor in a cuirass, another in a close-fitting coat, buttoned to the throat, this one as powdered officer of the French Guards, that one as a Colonel of the Restoration, making a direct line of dead and gone Guilleroys. The frames were so old that the gold crumbled and dropped off.

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"Open the windows," said the Countess to the two velvet-footed servants who were waiting upon them. "It is quite chilly in this room."

The three windows, almost as wide as bays, and reaching from the floor to the ceiling, were thrown open as double doors, letting in a rush of warm air, the fresh, sweet smell of new-mown hay, mingled with the humidity of the great, sombre dining-room enclosed in the thick walls of the old Château.

"Ah! that is delightful," said Annette drawing in a deep breath.

The two women looked out at the bright, blue summer sky, slightly veiled with the mid-day haze, which reflects on the earth when impregnated by the sun; from the opened windows they could see the long, green sweep of the park, dotted here and there with groups of trees, and the great expanse of yellow open country, which lay beyond, dazzling in the sunlight, illumined as far as the horizon by the cloth of gold of the ripe harvest.

"We will take a long walk after luncheon," said the Countess, "we might walk as far as Berville, following the pathway by the river, as it is much too warm to go across the fields."

"Yes, mamma," said Annette joyfully, "and we'll take Julio to hunt up the partridges."

"You know your father forbids that," replied her mother.

"Oh! Yes! but he is in Paris now, and you know mother, how amusing it is to watch Julio's ears stand up. *Tiens!* there he is annoying the cows now. *Dieu!* isn't he funny when he jumps about like that?"

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Pushing back her chair she got up and ran to the window crying out:

"Julio! Julio! good dog, Julio."

On the lawn three big cows, satiated with grass, and depressed with the heat, were resting on their flanks, with stomachs projecting, pushed forward by their weighty pressure on the soil. Going from one to the other, with loud barks and mad gambols, with furious but feigned anger, was Julio — a slender, white and russet chasing spaniel, whose crinkled ears pricked up every moment; he had set his heart upon making the three great animals get up, because they were tired and wanted to rest; this was his favorite game whenever he saw them resting comfortably. The cows were annoyed, but not frightened, they looked at him with their big moist eyes and slowly turned their heads to follow every movement.

Annette again called out from the window:

"Good Julio. Brave dog."

And the spaniel became more excited and bolder; he barked louder and ventured up to their buttocks and pretended to bite them. They were beginning to get uneasy and the nervous quivers of their flesh to drive off the flies, became more frequent and longer. Suddenly the dog carried off by a run, that he could not stop in time, arrived at full spring so near to one of the cows, that, so as not to turn a summersault and land at her feet, he had to jump over her. In his leap, his hind legs touched her lightly, the great beast started with fear and raising her head she got up slowly on her four feet. The other two seeing her stand up rose at once, and Julio barked joyfully, and danced around

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them his dance of triumph, while Annette warmly congratulated him, calling out:

"Bravo, Julio. That was well done. Bravo. Good dog."

"Annette! Annette! my child," said the Countess, "Come back to your luncheon at once."

But Annette was shading her eyes with her hands and looking out at the fields, way beyond the park.

"*Dieu!*" she exclaimed. "Right over there is a telegraph messenger, he is coming towards the Château."

In the invisible footpath that was lost in the midst of the wheat and oats, a blue blouse seemed to glide in and out, at the top of the ears of corn, coming in the direction of the park gates.

"Oh! *Mon Dieu!*" said the Countess, "I hope it is not bad news."

She still trembled with that terror which remains with us so long, when the first knowledge we have had of the death of a loved one, has come to us through a telegram. Even now she could not tear off the gummed band to open the little blue paper, without her fingers trembling, and her heart beating quickly, and thinking that the paper which took her so long to undo was bringing her another grief which would again make her tears flow.

Annette, on the contrary, was full of curiosity, she was young, and loved the unknown which comes to us. Her heart, which for the first time in her young life had been bruised, could only feel eager curiosity to know what news was in the formidable black bag slung on the hips of the postman, the black bag whose

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contents scattered so much joy and misery through the streets of the towns, and the roads of the villages.

The Countess left her luncheon, she could not eat, her mind was following this man who was coming towards her, the bearer of a few written words — words that perhaps would wound her like a knife-cut at the throat. The agony of suspense made her breath come in gasps; what could this news be that was so urgent. Was it Olivier? Was he ill? Perhaps he was dead, now lying cold and stiff and she would never see his loved face again.

The ten minutes that she waited for the messenger seemed interminable: then, when she had torn open the telegram and seen her husband's name, she read:

"Our friend Bertin starts for Roncières on the ten o'clock train. Send phaeton to station. Love."

"Well, mamma?" questioned Annette.

"Mr. Olivier Bertin is coming down to see us," she replied.

"Ah! *Quelle chance!* When is he coming?"

"To-day. Very soon."

"At four o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Oh! isn't he nice?"

But the Countess had turned pale, for a new fear had for some time been growing in her heart, and this abrupt arrival of the artist seemed to her as painful a menace, as any that she could have foreseen.

"You must go and meet him with the carriage," she said to her daughter.

"And you will come too, mamma, will you not?"

"No! I will wait for you here."

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"Oh! but why? He will be so sorry."

"I do not feel very well to-day, dear."

"But you said a little while ago, mother, that you wanted to walk as far as Berville."

"Yes! but I don't feel well, evidently the luncheon has not agreed with me."

"By four o'clock you will be better," persisted Annette.

"No! I am even going up to my room now. Let me know as soon as you come back."

"Yes, mamma."

Then after giving orders that the phaeton should be round at the door at the time desired, and that the guest's apartment should be in all readiness, the Countess went up to her room and locked herself in.

Her life up till now had glided away almost without suffering, the smooth course roughened only now and again by Olivier's affection, and her great anxiety and effort to keep it. She had always come out victorious in the struggle. Her heart, rocked by success and praises, became the exacting heart of a beautiful worldly woman, to whom all the comforts of this life are due. After having made a brilliant marriage where her inclinations were not considered, after accepting love as the complement to a happy existence, after having taken her part in a guilty *liaison*, drawn into it greatly by temptation, a little by religion for the sentiment itself, partly as a compensation for the vulgar monotony of her life,—she was fortified and barricaded in this happiness that chance had brought her way, so much so that her one desire was to defend and hold it against all. She had accepted with the friendly favor of a beautiful society woman, the agreeable events which came into

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her life; she had not that adventurous spirit that seems to belong to the worldly woman, she did not strive for new pleasure, and long for the unknown, but she was tender and clinging, thoughtful and contented with her present happiness, and although, by nature, she was anxious for the future, she knew how to enjoy the elements which destiny furnished her with a saving and shrewd discretion.

Then, little by little, without her even admitting it, there had crept into her soul the obscure preoccupation of the days that had passed, and age that was coming upon her; in her thoughts it took the form of a longing that never ceased. But she well knew that this decline of life was without end, and that once commenced it could not be stopped, and yielding to the instinct of danger she closed her eyes as she glided down life's pathway so as to keep her dream and not see the vertigo of the abyss which lay before her, and the hopelessness of her frailty.

So she lived on, smiling, with a sort of artificial pride that she had remained beautiful so long, and when Annette appeared at her side with the freshness of eighteen years, instead of suffering from this nearness, she was modestly proud on the contrary that the skilled grace of her maturity was preferred to the radiant bloom of her daughter's first youth.

She was thinking that now that Annette had come she would have a happy and tranquil period, when the death of her mother came and dashed all her hopes. There was no place in her heart for anything but the thought of her old mother; from morning till night she was sunk in grief, trying to recall a thousand little things of her dead,— some familiar words, her face as it used to be,

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the dresses she had once worn; then, when she had thus arrived at a paroxysm of hopelessness, she was seized every few minutes with nervous attacks and fainting fits; after a time all this accumulated grief burst out in tears and flowed from her eyes night and day. Then one day when her maid came into the room to draw back the curtains and open the shutters, she said to her mistress:

"*Comment va Madame aujourd' hui?*"

"Oh! not at all well," replied the Countess, "I am feeling quite worn out and exhausted. I must give up."

The girl held the breakfast tray in her hand, and as she looked at the Countess she exclaimed in voice of sincere pity:

"*En effet, Madame a très mauvaise mine. Madame ferait bien de se soigner.*"

The tone in which it was said seemed as though she had driven the point of a needle into the Countess' heart; as soon as the girl had closed the door behind her she got up and examined her face in the long glass.

She remained stupefied looking at her reflection, dismayed at the sight of her hollow cheeks and red eyes, at the ravages that these few days of suffering had made. She had studied her face so much that she knew all the expressions, all the good points, all her smiles; for had she not many times conquered the pallor, repaired the little fatigues; destroyed the light wrinkles which showed in the full daylight at the corner of the eyes, and now it suddenly seemed to her that she was looking at the face of another woman, which was decomposing and irreparably sick. To see better and to be able to verify more clearly this unexpected change, she

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went close to the face that looked at her from the mirror, she touched the glass with her forehead, and her hard breathing spread out a dampness on its surface, which obscured and almost effaced the wan image that she was gazing at. She took her handkerchief and wiped off the haze her breath had made, and trembling with a strange emotion, she made a long and patient examination of the alterations of her face.

With a light finger she stretched out the skin on her cheeks, and lifting up her wavy hair, smoothed out the forehead; she was dismayed at the yellow tints of the flesh above the cheek and on the temple; she then turned back her eyelids to see the white of the eye, and after examined her teeth which were slightly discolored near where the gold filling shone.

She gave so much attention to this review of her failing beauty that she did not hear the door open, and she started when her maid's voice behind her said:

"*Madame a oublié de prendre son thé.*"

The Countess turned round embarrassed and ashamed, and the servant, guessing her thoughts, said:

"It is because Madame has cried too much, there is nothing worse than tears for spoiling the skin. It is the blood turned into water."

"It is also age," said the Countess sadly.

"Oh! no, it is not age with Madame," said her maid. "With a few days' rest, Madame will be beautiful again, but Madame must go out more in the fresh air, and above all not cry."

As soon as she was dressed, the Countess went out in the park and for the first time since her mother's death, she went to visit the little orchard where she used

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to gather nosegays of flowers, then she reached the river, and walked along by the water until luncheon time.

When sitting at the table by her daughter's side, opposite to her husband, she said, so as to know what they thought:

"I feel so much better. I ought not to be so pale to-day."

"Oh! you don't look at all well. You look very sick indeed," the Count replied.

Her heart strings tightened and again she had the wish to cry; tears were quite a habit with her now.

All the evening and the next day and the days following, whether she was thinking of her mother or of herself, at every moment she felt a lump in her throat, and the tears spring to her eyes, but knowing now how fatal they were to her fading beauty, she kept them back and by a superhuman effort of will she brought herself to take an interest in other things, she mastered herself and controlled her emotions, she tried to banish all sad thoughts from her mind, so as to nurse herself back to health.

Above all things she did not wish to return to Paris and see Olivier Bertin, she felt she could not meet him until she had quite recovered; she was now too thin, and at last she realized the truth, that the flesh of a woman of her age needs to be full and firm so as to preserve its freshness. She went out daily in the fields and lanes to get back her appetite, and although she came back weary and worn, she would sit down to her luncheon and force herself to eat.

The Count wanted to return to Paris, and could not understand why she was so obstinate in refusing to leave

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Roncières; at last before her invincible resistance, he declared that if she would not return he would go alone, and leave her at liberty to follow when she felt disposed.

Two days after his departure, she received the telegram saying that Olivier would arrive that day.

She wanted to take flight, she so dreaded to meet his first look. She would rather have waited still another two or three weeks; in looking after herself carefully for a few weeks, she could make great changes in her face: there are women who even when they are well and young, under the least influence, are scarcely recognizable from one day to another. But the thought of appearing in full daylight,—in the clear light of the month of August before Olivier, in the glory of the summer sun beside Annette so fresh and fair, so like what she had once been,—worried her so much that she decided at once not to go to the station to meet him, but to wait in the half-light of the drawing-room.

She went up to her bedroom to think. From time to time little light breezes moved the lace curtains. The birds chirping filled the air with bird music. Never before had she felt so sad. It was no longer the great crushing grief which had bruised her heart, which had torn her and bowed her down before the soulless body of her dearly loved old mother. This new grief was a thing apart, it had carried her off and she was being drowned in a deep melancholy wave, she had gone into it gently at first, but now she found she could not come out again. Her great wish seemed to be to cry, it was an irresistible want, but she would not give way. Each time that she felt her eyelids wet, she wiped them quickly, got up and walked about,

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looked out over the park at the great trees in the forest, and the black-birds in their dark, slow flight, soaring in the clear blue sky above. Then she paused before her mirror, and judged her looks at a glance; she effaced the trace of a tear, touching the corner of the eye with a powder puff, and then she looked at the clock, wondering how far up the road he had already come.

Like all women who carry distress of the soul, whether it is imaginary or real, she clung to him with a desperate, passionate tenderness. Was he not everything to her, *all, all,* more than her life, all that a man can become to a woman, when she loves him only, and knows that she is growing old!

Suddenly she heard on the drive below the cracking of a whip; she ran to the window and saw the phaeton coming round the lawn with the horses galloping. Seated at Annette's side, leaning back in the depths of the carriage, was Olivier; he waved his handkerchief when he saw the Countess, and she replied to his sign by waving her hand. Then she went down the stairs, with heart beating, but happy for the moment, her fears had vanished, she was all excitement with the joy of knowing that he was so near, she was going to see him, and speak to him.

They met in the hall outside the drawing-room door. He opened his arms to her in an outburst of love and in a voice ringing with true emotion he said:

"Ah! Any, Any! My poor Any, my sweetheart."

She closed her eyes and leaned towards him, she nestled up against him holding up her cheek, and as he pressed his lips to it she said simply: "I love you."

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Then Olivier, still holding her hands, looked down at her.

"But what a sad, white face, Any," he said.

For a moment she turned faint, then he said:

"You look just a little wan, but that is nothing, it will pass."

She could only murmur in gratitude:

"*Mon ami, mon cher ami,*" she could find nothing more to say.

But he had turned round and was looking for Annette, who had disappeared as he came in the house.

"Isn't it strange, though, to see your daughter in deep mourning?"

"Why strange?" asked the Countess.

"You ask why?" he said with animation. "Why it is your portrait, your portrait that I painted, my own picture. It is you just as I saw you the first day leaving the Duchess' house. You remember the afternoon you came out of the doorway. *Sacristi!* when I saw the *petite* at the station just now, standing there on the platform all in black with the sun lighting up her blonde hair, I was startled; she was blonde and black, the living image of you the day I met you. I almost cried out, I was so bewildered, it startled me. When one has known you as I have, I have known you more than anyone, and loved you more than anyone, and have reproduced you in painting. *Ah! par exemple!* I believe you sent her alone to meet me at the station so as to startle me. *Dieu!* how strange it is. I tell you, Any, I am still bewildered."

"Annette! Nané!" he called out.

The young girl was outside feeding the horses with lumps of sugar.

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"*Voilà! Voilà!*" she cried.

She ran to them.

"*Dieu!*" said the painter, "Stand there beside your mother quite close, here, near the light." He compared them, but he repeated mechanically without conviction:

"Yes! it is astonishing — astonishing." For now they resembled each other less when side by side than before they left Paris. The young girl in her straight black garments had a new expression of luminous youth, while since a long time the mother had lost that golden blonde hair, and the peach-like skin that had dazzled and captivated him when he saw her for the first time.

Annette ran upstairs, and Madame de Guilleroy and the artist went in the drawing-room together. He was radiant.

"Ah! what a good idea it was of mine to come," he said, "or rather, what a good idea it was of your husband's, for it was he who thought of it. He commissioned me to bring you back, but do you know what I propose? No? Well, I suggest, on the contrary, that you stay here. It is so cool, and Paris is odious, and now the country is at its very best. *Dieu!* isn't it glorious?"

The evening was falling, and the park was impregnated with a dewy freshness, and the earth emitted imperceptible vapors which threw on the horizon a light, transparent haze. The leaves on the trees shook gently. On the green sward, the three cows were standing with lowered heads and browsing greedily, and four peacocks with important flutterings of their gaudy plumage got up, and perched themselves in a cedar-tree, where they slept at night, under the windows of the Château. Afar off came the sound of dogs barking,

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and in the quiet peace of even-tide, there were heard occasional calls of human voices,— the peasants shouting to their comrades across the harvest fields, and the short guttural cry of the drivers as they spurred on the oxen.

The painter stood bare-headed with shining eyes, inhaling deep breaths of air, and as the Countess looked at him, he said softly:

"Ah! This is happiness."

She went up to him and laid her hands on his shoulder.

"This cannot last," she said.

"No! but we will take it now it comes."

"Until now you did not like the country," she said smiling up at him.

"I like it to-day because I find you here, I cannot now live anywhere where you are not, Any. When one is young one can be in love afar off, by letters, by thoughts, by pure exaltations; perhaps because one feels that life is before one; perhaps also when one is young, one has more passion than heart longings; but, at my age, love has become the habit of the infirm; it is a dressing of the soul which now has only one wing and flies less in the Ideal. The heart no longer has esctasies, only selfish exigencies. And then I feel only too well that I have no time to lose if I want to enjoy the rest."

"Oh! poor old man," she said smiling into his eyes as she took his hand in hers.

"Yes! Any, I mean it," he replied. "I am old. Everything shows it,— my hair, my character which has changed, this sadness which often comes upon me now. That is something I have not known until recently — sadness. If someone had told me when I

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was thirty years old, that one day I should become sad without a cause, anxious, discontented with everything, I should not have believed it. That proves that my heart also has got old."

"Oh! my heart is quite young," she said with profound certitude. "It has not changed at all. Yes! I think perhaps it has become younger."

They stayed a long time talking thus by the open window, standing close to one another, her hand clasped in his, nearer in this hour of tender communion, in this hour of evening twilight than they had been for a long time. A knock at the door, and the servant entered saying:

"*Madame la comtesse est servie.*"

"Does Mademoiselle Annette know?" asked the Countess.

"*Oui, Madame. Mademoiselle est dans la salle à manger.*"

The three sat down to table. The shutters were closed and the light from two large candelabra of six candles fell across the young girl's face, making her hair look like powdered gold. Bertin smiled and looked at her in admiration. "*Dieu!* isn't she pretty in black!" he said. And he turned towards the Countess after admiring her daughter, as though to thank the mother for having given him this pleasure. When they returned to the drawing-room the moon was up, and shone clearly above the great trees in the park. The dark mass of foliage looked like an island and the country beyond seemed like the gray sea hidden behind the dewy mists which hung over the wide plains.

"Oh! mamma! let us take a stroll, it is so beautiful this evening," cried Annette.

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"Very well."

"May I take Julio?"

"Yes, if you like."

They went out. The young girl walked ahead playing with the dog. When they crossed the lawn they heard the snorting of the cows, who were awake, and felt their enemy was near, and they looked up and watched him as he passed. Under the trees farther on, the moon glimmered between the branches, throwing down a shower of fine rays, which glided just to the earth, steeping the leaves and shedding on the road little pools of pure silvery light. Annette and Julio ran on seeming to have in this serene night the same joyous and empty heart. In the glades where the lunar wave fell across the earth, the young girl passed like an apparition, and the painter called her back to them, he was feeling a vague trouble at this black vision with the shiny blonde hair and the fair face. Then when she returned to them, and went off again, he took her mother's hand in his and held it tightly, and as they passed through the deepest shadows, he pressed it to his lips as if each time the sight of Annette revived the longings of his heart. At last they reached the open country; on the great expanse of plains, a few farms and groups of trees were scattered. Across the grayish mist that had crept over the fields was the boundless horizon, and the light silence, the living silence of this beautiful luminous space, was full of unutterable hopes, of undefinable expectations, of the longings which make the summer nights so sweet. High above in the heavens some little thin clouds, stretched out a long line, looking like strings of silver shells. When stopping for a moment, one could listen and hear in

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this nocturnal peace, a confused and continued murmur of life — a thousand faint sounds whose harmony at first resembled silence.

A quail in the neighboring meadow sent forth his double cry, and Julio with ears pricked up, went off with cautious steps in the direction whence the two soft flute-like notes had come. Annette followed with a step as light and furtive as the dog's, holding her breath and stooping low as she crept along.

"Ah!" said the Countess, as the painter and she were left alone. "Why do moments like this pass so quickly, one can hold nothing, one can keep nothing. We have not even enough time to taste that which is so good. It is already finished." Olivier drew her hand to his lips, and said smiling:

"This evening I am not philosophical. I am all for the present moment."

"You do not love me as much as I love you," she murmured.

"*Mais! par exemple!* . . . " he began.

She interrupted him, saying:

"No! you love me in the way you spoke of before dinner — as a woman who satisfies the wants of your heart, a woman who has never given you any pain, and who has brought some happiness into your life. I know it and feel it. Yes! I have the consciousness, the fervent joy of having been good, useful, and a help to you. You loved, and you still love, all that you find agreeable in me — my care for you, my admiration, my desire to please you, my passion, the complete gift that I have made to you of my intimate being. But it is not me that you love, do you understand, Olivier? Alas! I know it, and feel it, as one feels a cold air that

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blows over one. There are many things that you like in me, my beauty, which is now fading, my devotion, the intellect which one accords me, the opinions which our social friends have of me, and the opinion which you know I have of you, but it is not myself, just me, nothing but myself, do you understand?"

"No, I do not understand very clearly," he said with an amiable little laugh. "Why this unexpected scene of reproaches?"

"Oh! My God," she cried. "If you could only know how much I do love you. I try to make you understand, but I cannot find a way. When I think of you, and that is always, I feel in the innermost depths of my being — of my soul, an unspeakable joy that I belong to you, and an irresistible wish that I could give you more of myself. I want to sacrifice myself in the most absolute manner, for there is nothing better when a woman really loves than for her to give forever, *all, all,* her life, her thought, her body, all that she has, and to feel that she has given, and to be ready to risk all, so as to be able to give still more. I love you, and my love is so strong, that I can even love to suffer for you, I can love to bear my anxieties, torments, jealousies, the pain I have when I feel that you are not tender towards me. There is something I love in you, *someone* in you that I alone have discovered, *someone* that is not known to our world, but a someone that is mine, that can never change, he can never grow old, and I can never stop loving him, for my eyes can see nothing but him — always him.

"I cannot say these things," she said, "There are no words that can express them."

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"Dear Any, ah! ma chère amie," he repeated several times in a low stifled voice.

And then Julio bounded up to them, without having found the quail which had stopped chirruping at his approach, and Annette came running up quickly.

"I can't do anything more," she said panting for breath. "I am simply fagged out,— the rest of the way I shall cling to you, monsieur le peintre."

She leaned on Olivier's other arm and so they returned to the Château — the painter walking slowly between the two women under the shadows of the great, dark trees. No one spoke. He walked on bewitched by them both; it was as though he were penetrated by a sort of feminine fluid, with which their near contact seemed to inundate him. He did not try to look at them, for he had them both close to him, and he even closed his eyes as if to feel their contact better. They guided him along, and drew him homeward, and he went forward bewitched by them both — the one on the left as much as the one on the right — which one was on the left, which was the mother, and which the child. He voluntarily gave himself up with an unconscious and subtle sensuality to the strangeness of this situation; he even sought to mingle them in his heart; and tried not to distinguish them in his thoughts, and he deluded his desire with the charm of this confusion. This mother and daughter so much alike — were they not one woman? And the child had she not come into the world only to revive the old love for the mother?

He opened his eyes when they reached the château and it seemed to him that he had passed through the sweetest moments of his life; he had experienced the

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strangest, the most unanalytical, the most complete emotion, that a man could feel, he was intoxicated with the same passionate tenderness from the seduction emanating from two different women.

"What a beautiful night it has been," he said, when they again stood in the lamp-light of the salon.

"I don't feel I want to go to bed to-night," cried Annette. "I could pass the whole night out of doors when it is beautiful like this."

"But, my child — it is half past eleven," cried the Countess, looking at the clock. "You must go to bed at once."

They wished each other good-night, and separated, each going to their own apartment. And Annette who had no wish to go to bed was sound asleep in a minute.

The next morning at the usual hour, when the maid had drawn back the curtains, opened the shutters and arranged the little breakfast table by the side of the bed, she looked at her mistress who was still half asleep.

"Madame la Comtesse already looks much better than yesterday," she said.

"Do you think so?"

"Oh! yes. Madame's face is more restful."

The Countess without looking at herself in the mirror, knew that what her maid said was true. Her heart was light, she could not feel it beating, and she felt keenly alive. The blood which flowed through her veins was no longer hot and charged with fever as it had been yesterday, when it rushed through her overwrought and restless body. This morning, it was flowing gently and evenly, she was enveloped in a sense of well-being and comfort. She experienced a feeling of delightful and happy confidence. When the servant

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had gone she looked in the mirror; she was a little surprised, for she felt so well that she expected to find herself looking several years younger in one night. Then she thought how childish it was to think so, and after looking in the mirror again, she resigned herself to the fact that it was only her color that was clearer, and the dark lines had disappeared and the lips had more life in them than the night before. She felt an inward contentment and she smiled as she thought: "Yes! in a few days I shall be quite myself again. I was too broken down to get well so quickly." But she stayed a very long time seated before her dressing-table, where all the little instruments of coquetry in ivory and silver bearing her initials and crest, were laid out ready for use on a doily of mousseline de soie, bordered with lace, before the beautiful mirror in cut crystal; there were a few in steel, fine and of odd shapes, like instruments of surgery that are used for operating on children's wounds, then there were round and soft pads in feathers, swansdown, the skin of some beast, used to spread over her soft flesh the caress of scented powders and perfumes in paste or liquid. For a long time she used them with her skilled hands; going from lip to temple, she touched here and there with a touch softer than a kiss. She corrected shades that she found imperfect, enhanced the beauty of the eyes and the line of the eyebrow. When she was ready to go down-stairs, she felt almost sure that the first look Olivier would give her, would not be a dissatisfied one.

"Where is M. Bertin?" she asked as she passed a servant in the hall.

"He is in the garden, Madame," replied the man. "He is playing lawn tennis with Mademoiselle."

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She could now hear their voices in the distance crying out the points.

One after another, first the painter's full, deep voice, then the clear tones of the young girl called out "15," "30," "40," "advantage," "advantage all," "advantage," "Game."

The orchard where the tennis courts were laid out was a great square of grass planted with apple-trees, and closed in by the park, the kitchen garden, and the farms belonging to the château. At the end of the slope which limited it to three sides, like the defenses of an intrenched camp, some flowers had been planted, long borders of all sorts of flowers, some wild, some cultivated — quantities of roses, pinks, sunflowers, fuchsias, mignonette and many others, which gave the air, as Bertin expressed it, the taste of honey. Besides, there were some bees. The hives stood in a row, with their domes of straw up against the fruit wall of the kitchen garden; the bees were busy all day long and overspread the flowery field with their buzzing and yellow flight. In the very center of the orchard some apple-trees were growing, and so as to obtain the necessary space for the tennis courts and tarred wire enclosure, from here the space was partitioned off, and then separated into two camps that were splendidly fitted for the purpose.

Annette was on one side, bare-headed, with her black skirt pinned up, showing her ankles, and several inches above, when she sprang to catch the flying ball. Her eyes were sparkling and her cheeks bright, but she was tired and out of breath and greatly annoyed at the correct and sure play of her opponent. Bertin wore a white flannel shirt and trousers, tightened at

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the loins with a gay colored belt, and a white peaked cap.

He coolly waited for the ball, judging correctly where it would fall; he received and returned it without exertion or hurry, but with the graceful ease, keen attention and professional skill that he showed in all exercises.

Annette was the first to see her mother. "Good morning, mama," she cried out. "Just wait one minute while I take this ball."

This distraction of a moment made her lose it. The ball passed against her, quick and low, almost rolling; it touched the ground, then went out of court.

Bertin called out "Game" and Annette looked at him in surprise, then accused him of having taken advantage while she was talking to her mother.

Julio straightened up and went after the ball; these lost balls had deceived him many times this morning; they went off into the bushes just like partridges. This one, however, rolled gently before him on the grass, so he trotted up behind it, picked it up daintily in his jaws, and wagging his tail brought it back to his mistress.

The painter now turned to wish Madame de Guilleroy good-morning, but he was animated by the contest and anxious to get back to another game. He was enjoying himself and pleased to feel that he was in such good form. He only gave a passing glance at the beautiful face that had been so carefully got up just for him.

"You will excuse me, dear Countess," he said. "I am very warm and I do not wish to get cool. I am afraid I shall get neuralgia. You will excuse me?"

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"Why. certainly," she said, "please continue your game."

She sat down on a heap of hay that had just been mowed down, to give free field to the players, and with heart suddenly grown a little sad she watched their play.

Annette was angry that she lost always and became more animated and excited. From one end to the other of the court came cries of disdain, then of triumph or an impetuous outburst as she sprang to and fro. Her hair came down and untwisted and fell on her shoulders; she seized it impatiently and in a few seconds, holding the racquet between her knees, she screwed it up and roughly stuck a tortoise shell pin through the great coil.

"*Hein!* Isn't she pretty like that and as fresh as the morning," Bertin called out to the Countess.

Yes, she was young, she could run about, be warm and get red in the face, let her hair fall down, brave all, dare anything, because she was pretty through it all.

They commenced another game and the Countess, feeling more and more melancholy, knew that Olivier preferred this game of ball — this exciting, childish pleasure — just like cats running after paper balls, to the pleasure of sitting with her on this warm morning, and she felt that she was against him and yet loved him.

When the clock in the distance struck the first stroke of the hour for luncheon it seemed that she was being delivered from something, that a weight was lifted from her heart, but as she returned to the house, holding his arm, he said:

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"I have been amusing myself this morning like a youngster. It is good to be young or to imagine for the moment that one is young. Ah! yes! Youth is everything. When one has no wish to run about one is finished."

When they got up from the table the Countess, who for the first time the day before had missed going to the cemetery, proposed that they should go together, so they all three started for the village.

They had to cross a wood where a little stream flowed through, which they called Rainette, because it was full of small frogs; then they had to cross the end of the plain before arriving at the church, which was built among a group of houses where the grocer, baker, butcher and the café, and a few other modest tradespeople from whom the peasants bought their provisions, had their stores.

It was a silent and meditative walk; the thought of the dead oppressed them all. When they arrived at the cemetery the two women knelt and prayed on the tomb for a long time. The Countess, bowed down and motionless, had her handkerchief pressed against her eyes. She was afraid to cry for fear the tears would flow on her cheeks. She prayed, but not in the way that she had prayed before — by a sort of evocation of her mother, by a hopeless call to her under the marble of the tomb, until she believed in her heart-rending emotion that the dead was listening to her — but now she simply repeated the sacred words of the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria*. That day she would not have had the strength, and the intense application of mind which she needed for this sort of cruel communication without reply, with that which alone lived

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of the being whose body was hidden under the damp earth below. Other obsessions had penetrated into her woman's heart which had stirred and bruised her, and her fervent prayer went up to heaven full of obscure supplications. She implored God, the inexorable God who has thrown on the earth all the poor creatures, to have pity on her as much as he had had for the one that he had called unto him. She could not say what she asked him. She was afraid of something, but she did not know what it was. Her fears were confused and hidden, but she felt that she had need of Divine aid, of a supernatural help against the approaching danger and the inevitable sadness that would follow. Annette, with closed eyes, after having muttered her prayers, had fallen into a reverie, because she did not want to rise from her knees before her mother.

Olivier Bertin looked at them both kneeling by the marble tomb and thought what a splendid picture he could make, and regretted that he could not then and there make a sketch of them. On their walk back they talked of the human existence, stirring gently the bitter and poetical idea of a compassionate and discouraged philosophy, which is a frequent subject of conversation between men and women whose lives fate has hurt a little and whose hearts mingle when confiding their troubles.

Annette was not old enough for these thoughts and was little interested in what they were saying. She went off every few minutes to gather the wild flowers that were growing along the hedges. But Olivier wanted to keep her near him. He did not like to see her running away all the time, and his eye followed

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her wherever she went. It annoyed him that she was more eager to note the varied colors of the flowers than to listen to what he was saying. He felt a great annoyance to think that he was not able to fascinate and dominate her as he did her mother; he would have liked to have stretched out his hand and seized hers, to hold her back, and forbid her to run away. He felt she was too active, too young, too indifferent, too free — free as a bird. She was like a young dog that would not be mastered, that would not come back, who has in its veins the independent spirit and that pretty instinct of liberty that the voice and the whip have not had time to conquer.

To entice her back, he dropped their serious talk and began to speak on gayer subjects, and now and then he turned to question her, trying to awaken in her a desire to listen and arouse her woman's curiosity; but it seemed that the capricious wind of the heavens was blowing in Annette's head, just like it was on the waving, golden ears of corn, and carrying and dispersing her attention into space, for she had scarcely replied the commonplace answer that was expected of her, which she gave with an absent look, than she returned to her flowers. At last Bertin was exasperated and bit his lips in boyish impatience, and as she came up to ask her mother to carry her first bunch of flowers, so that she could pick another, he caught her by the shoulder and tightened his grasp on her arm so that she could not escape. She laughed and struck at him, trying with all her might to get free. Then, matured by a man's instinct, he employed the means of the weak, and not being able to get her to give her attention, he bought it by tempting her coquetry.

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"Tell me," he said, "what flowers do you prefer? I will have a brooch made for you."

She looked at him in surprise.

"A brooch! How?" she exclaimed.

"In stones of the same color; in rubies if it is the poppy, in sapphires for the cornflower, with little leaves of emeralds."

Annette's face lit up with delight, with that joyful look which promises and presents bring to women's faces.

"The cornflower," she said promptly. "It is so pretty."

"That goes for the cornflower, then," said the artist; "we will go and order it as soon as we return to Paris."

She did not go off again. She was drawn to him by the thought of the jewel. She was already trying to imagine what it would be like. "Does it take long to do a thing like that?" she asked as she clung to his arm.

He laughed, seeing that his bait had taken. "I don't know; that depends if there are any difficulties, but we will hurry up the jeweler."

A dismal thought crossed her mind. Her face clouded. "Oh! what a shame! I won't be able to wear it now I am in mourning."

He pressed her arm and drew her closer to him. "*Eh bien!* little one," he said, looking down at her, "you can keep your brooch until you are out of mourning; that won't stop you from looking at it."

Like the evening before, he was walking between them both, held closely — a prisoner between their shoulders, and so as to look into their blue eyes, so

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alike, with their specks of black points, he spoke to each in turn, turning his head first to one, then to the other. The full sun dazzled them, but now he did not confuse the Countess with Annette, as he did yesterday, but he blended the young girl more and more with the remembrance of what the mother had been. He wanted to embrace them both, the one for letting him refind on her cheek and on her neck a little of the pink and white freshness that he had tasted so long ago, and which he saw again miraculously reappearing; the other because he loved her always and he always felt coming from her the powerful call of an old love. He knew and felt that his passion, which had been a little weak for a long time, and his affection for her, had been revived at the sight of her resurrected youth.

Annette went off again to pick flowers. Olivier did not call her back again; it seemed as if the touch of her arm and the satisfaction of the joy he had given her had pacified him, but his eye followed her every movement with that pleasure that one feels in looking at people and things which draw and fascinate our eyes. When she came back, carrying a sheaf, he breathed more deeply, seeking, without knowing it, some thing from her, a little of her breath or the warmth of her body as she brushed against him. He looked at her rapturously, as one looks at the morning dawn, as one listens to music; with a start of pleasure when she stooped down and then rose again, lifting her two arms at the same time to arrange her hair. And then stronger and stronger, from hour to hour, she stirred him, and brought back more and more the days that had passed; she had little laughs, pretty ways, certain movements which brought back to his mouth the taste

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of kisses that had been given and returned long, long ago.

She made of the distant past of which he had lost the exact sensation, something that was like to a present dream; she jumbled his thoughts together — the epochs, the dates, the ages of his heart; she mixed up and rekindled his chilled emotions, and blended days that had passed with days that were to come — the yesterday with the to-morrow —the remembrance with the future hope.

He asked himself, in searching his memory, if the Countess in her youthful days had had this supple charm, this grace of a young fawn, these daring, capricious ways, like the grace of an animal which runs and frisks about in gambols. No! She had been less wild, more of a hothouse flower. A town bred girl, then a woman of society, she had never drank the air of the fields and lived among the trees and woods; she had grown up beautiful in the garden of flowers under the protecting shadow of its walls, and not under heaven's full bright sun like Annette.

When they got back to the château the Countess sat down at the little low table in the recess of the wide window and wrote some letters. Annette went up to her room and the painter went out again. He walked with slow steps, a cigar in his mouth, his hands behind his back, along the roads outside the park, but he did not go far enough to lose sight of the white façade or the pointed roof of the château. The moment it disappeared from his view behind the trees or the dense shrubbery he felt as though a shadow had crossed his heart, like when the sun is hidden by clouds, and when he again saw it through the opening of the foliage he

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stopped for a moment and looked at the two straight lines of the upstair windows. Then he walked on again.

He felt excited and happy. Happy at what? At everything. The air seemed so pure to him, it was so good to be alive this day; he felt again in his body the buoyancy of youth, the wish to run and catch in his hands the yellow butterflies as they flew to and fro over the fields, as though they were suspended at the end of an elastic thread. He sang some operatic airs. Several times he repeated the celebrated air by Gounod, *Laisse-moi contempler ton visage,* and discovered in the beautiful words a tender, deeper expression than he had ever felt before.

He asked himself what had happened to make him feel so different from yesterday. Such a short time had elapsed. Only yesterday in Paris he was discontented with everything, thoroughly disgusted with life, and now to-day he was happy, calm, satisfied with all; it seemed as though an affable god must have changed his soul. "That obliging god," he thought, "might have changed my body at the same time and made me a little younger."

He looked up and saw Julio, who was searching in the thickets. He called him and when the dog came and laid his shapely little head with its long crinkly ears on his hand he sat down on the grass to be able to play with him better; said nice little things to him in dog language, and took him on his knees and fondled him, just as women do whose hearts are stirred on all occasions.

In the evening after dinner, instead of going for a

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stroll like the night before, they passed the *soirée* in the drawing room *en famille*.

"We must be going back to Paris," said the Countess, looking up suddenly from her embroidery.

"Oh! don't speak of that yet," cried Olivier. "You did not want to leave Roncières before I came, why do you want to go back as soon as I arrive?"

"But, *mon cher ami*," she said, "we cannot all three stay here indefinitely."

"We are not thinking of staying indefinitely, but just a few days more. I have stayed with you for several weeks at a time before."

"Yes, but under other circumstances, when the house was open to every one."

"Oh, mama," said Annette in a wheedling tone, "don't go back yet; let us stay just two or three days more. I am learning to play tennis so well, I am *so* angry when I lose and then afterwards I am *so* pleased that I have made some progress."

Only that same morning the Countess had planned to prolong this mysterious visit of her friend until the following Sunday, and now she wanted to return to Paris without knowing why. She had hoped that this day would be so happy, but it had left in her soul a penetrating sadness — fears that she could not understand — clinging and confused like a presentiment. When she was alone in her room she tried to think what had caused this new attack of melancholy. Had she undergone one of those imperceptible emotions of which the touch is so transient that the cause cannot be remembered, but whose vibration lingers in the most sensitive chords of the heart? Perhaps. But

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what? She remembered some unavowable vexations in the many phases of sentiment through which she had passed, but they were really too small for her to be cast down about them. "I am unreasonable," she thought. "I ought not to torment myself like this."

She opened her window to breathe the fresh air of the night, and she stayed there, leaning her elbows on the window-sill, looking out at the clear silvery moon.

A slight noise made her look below. Olivier was walking up and down before the château. "Why did he say he was going to his room?" she thought. "Why did he not tell me he was going out in the garden? He might have asked me to go with him. He knows so well that it would have made me very happy. What is he dreaming of now?"

This idea that he did not want her to walk with him, that he preferred to be alone this beautiful night, by himself, smoking a cigar — for she could see the little red speck of fire — alone, when he could have given her the joy of taking her with him; this idea that he did not need her filled her with a new ferment of bitterness.

She was going to close the window so as not to see him, or be tempted to call him, when he looked up and saw her.

"*Tiens!* Are you star-dreaming, Countess?" he cried.

"Yes, and you also, it seems to me," she replied.

She could not resist saying:

"Why did you not tell me you were going out?"

"I only wanted to smoke one cigar. I was just going in."

"Then good-night, *mon ami.*"

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"Good-night, Countess."

She drew in as far as her low chair and sat down and buried her face in her hands. Later, when she rang for her maid, the girl, seeing her mistress' eyes were red, said with compassion: *"Ah! Madame va encore se faire une vilaine figure pour demain."*

The Countess slept very badly that night. She was restless and tormented with nightmares. When she awoke next morning, before ringing for her maid, she drew back the curtains and opened the windows herself to look in her mirror. Her features were drawn, the eyelids swollen, her complexion very sallow, and the sorrow that she felt was so great that she wanted to send down word that she was ill, so as to stay in her room and not show herself until the evening. Then the wish to go back to Paris became so imperative that it superseded all other thoughts. She wanted to go at once, by the first train, and leave this clear country, where in its full summer daylight one saw too well the ineffaceable lines of grief and life.

In Paris one lives in the half-light of the apartments, where the rich curtains, even in full daylight, only let a soft, mellow light enter. There she would be herself again, in her proper setting — beautiful, with her clear pale skin and shadowy eyes looking their best in the half-toned, subdued light. Then Annette's face passed before her eyes, high-colored and rough tumbled hair, so fresh when she ran about playing tennis. Now she understood the unknown uneasiness which she had suffered.

It was not that she was jealous of her daughter's beauty. No! no! that would be despicable; it was not that, but she felt and she admitted now for the first

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time that, when Olivier was near, she ought never to show herself in the brightness of the summer sun beside her daughter.

She rang the bell and before drinking her tea she gave orders for their return. She wrote some telegrams, cabled the menu for dinner that evening, settled the accounts she had incurred in the country, gave out her last instructions, and had everything arranged in less than an hour; she was now a prey to a feverish and growing impatience. When she went down Annette and Olivier, who had been informed of her decision, questioned her with surprise; then, seeing that she would not give any reason for this abrupt departure — at least, no precise reason — they grumbled and sulked and showed their dissatisfaction up to the moment when they separated at the terminus in Paris.

The Countess held out her hand to say good-bye to the painter.

"Will you dine with us to-morrow?" she asked.

"Certainly I will come," he said, still a little sulky. "But all the same I do not think it was nice of you to do what you have done. We were so comfortable down there, all three together."

CHAPTER III

As soon as the Countess was alone in her *coupé* with her daughter, and they were being driven rapidly home, a sense of tranquillity and peace came over her. It was as though she had gone through a redoubtable crisis. She breathed freely. She looked out of the window and smiled as they passed through the streets. She saw again with pleasure this beautiful

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city, of which the real Parisians seem to always carry the familiar details in their eyes and hearts.

Here were her favorite shops; they were now nearing the jewelers; she remembered the merchant's face that she had so often seen behind his *vitrine* — above were the salons of Madame X, who made such exquisite lingerie. She breathed freely, she was in her own loved city again, and she was saved. Saved from what? She was at rest. Why? She was confident. About what?

When the *coupé* stopped under the archway of the carriage entrance she stepped out lightly and then glided up the dim wide staircase, whose subdued light came through the stained glass windows; then into the rich darkened *salon,* and on into the soft light of her bedroom. There she stood for a few moments, happy to be there in the security of this vague, hazy Paris day. There was no cruel, dazzling sunlight here — one could leave to the imagination, one could show what one liked and hide what one liked. The unreasonable remembrance of the bright light which bathed the country still remained with her, like the impression of a suffering that she had undergone. When she came down dressed for dinner her husband was just coming in. He kissed her with affection and said, smiling:

"*Ah! ma chère,* I knew well enough that friend Bertin would bring you back. I did not do a foolish thing in sending him to you."

Annette looked at her father and mother with gravity and said in the droll voice that she had when she joked without laughing:

"Oh! but papa, if you knew what a lot of trouble he had. Mother could not be persuaded to leave Roncières; he had to force her."

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The Countess looked confused and said nothing. No one came that evening; orders had been given that they were not at home to anyone. Madame de Guilleroy spent all the next day in the shops, choosing and ordering all the pretty things that she required.

Since her girlhood — in fact, almost since her childhood — she had always enjoyed the long fittings before the mirror in the big dressmakers' show-rooms. So as soon as she was back in town she felt pleased at the thought of all the details of this minute repetition in the grooves of the Parisian life. She liked to see the *vendenses,* hastening towards her — their smiles, their suggestions, their interrogations; and madame, the *conturière,* the *modiste* and the *corsetière* were for her persons of worth that she treated as artists when she explained her opinion and asked their advice. She liked still more to feel the skillful hands of the young girls about her as they tried on her gowns and made her turn round and about before her gracious reflection. The touch of their light fingers upon her skin, on her neck, in her hair, was one of the softest *petites gourmandises* that she enjoyed in her life of *femme élégante.*

This day, however, it was with a certain feeling of uneasiness that she was going to stand without a veil and bareheaded before these sincere mirrors.

But her first visit to the *modiste* reassured her. The three hats that she tried on suited her to perfection; there was no doubt about it, and when the *vendeuse* said to her with sincerity, "*Oh, Madame la Comtesse, les blondes ne devraient jamais quitter le deuil,*" she left the show-room quite contented and went full of confidence to the other *fournisseurs.*

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When she arrived home she found a little note from the Duchess, who had called while she was out, saying she would come again in the evening. Then she wrote some letters. Then she sat musing for a while. It seemed surprising that this simple change of abode had drawn back into a past which seemed already far away, the great unhappiness which she had felt. It seemed impossible that it was only yesterday that she returned from Roncières, for the state of her feelings was so modified since she returned to Paris that it was as if this little change had cauterized her wounds.

When Bertin arrived at the dinner hour he looked at her in surprise.

"How beautiful you are this evening, *mon amie.* Why, you are perfectly dazzling," he exclaimed. And his few words filled her with a warm wave of happiness.

When they left the table the Count, who had a passion for billiards, challenged Bertin to a game, and the two women went with them into the billiard room, where the Countess ordered the coffee and *liqueurs* to be served. The men were still playing when the Duchess was announced. They left their game and all went into the salon.

Madame de Mortemain was full of sympathy for the family's bereavement. For several minutes it seemed by the doleful tones of the conversation that everyone was on the verge of tears, but little by little, after the Duchess had feelingly expressed her sympathy and condolences, they drifted into lighter talk. Then Bertin got up and took Annette by the hand and placed her under her mother's portrait, with the light from the reflector falling from the picture onto the young girl. "Isn't this enough to startle one?" he said.

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The Duchess was so surprised that for a few moments she remained staring at Annette. "*Dieu!*" she exclaimed at last, "*Dieu!* is it possible, is it possible? It is a resurrection. How could I not have noticed it when I came in. Ah! *ma petite Any, ma petite Any!* Now I see you again. I who knew you so well in your first mourning. No, not in your first, in your second," she corrected, "for you had already lost your father. And this Annette in black like that, why it's her mother when she was young come back to earth. *Quel miracle!* Without this portrait one would not have noticed it. Your daughter resembles you very much in reality, but the portrait — why, it's marvelous, marvelous!"

Musadieu came in at this moment, having heard of their return, and intending to be the first to present "the homage of his sympathetic condolences."

He stopped in his speech when he saw the young girl standing before the picture, with the soft light above thrown over her. She seemed to be the living sister to the painting.

"*Ah! par exemple!*" he exclaimed, "that is the most astonishing thing I have yet seen."

And the Corbelles came and marveled in their turn with a more discreet ardor. Their conviction always followed opinions that had already been established.

The Countess felt a dull pain at her heart; it seemed as if the astonished exclamations of all these people had combined to make her suffer. Without saying a word she looked at her child, standing beside the portrait and she became unnerved. In her pain she wanted to cry out:

"Please be quiet. Say nothing more. Do I not know

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myself how much she resembles what I once was?"

All the evening she was very quiet. She had again lost the confidence that she had refound when she arrived home.

Bertin was talking with her when the Marquis de Farandal was announced.

When the painter saw him come into the room and walk towards the mistress of the house, he got up and stepped behind the divan on which they were sitting, murmuring:

"*Allons bon!* here's this big fool now," then having made the tour of the room he reached the door and went out.

After the Countess had greeted the newcomer and thanked him in a few words for his kind expressions of sympathy, she turned round to look for Olivier, to take up the thread of their conversation, which had been upon a matter of great interest to her.

"What! has the *grand homme* gone?" she asked.

"I think he has, my dear," replied her husband. "I saw him go out *à l'anglaise.*"

She was surprised, and remained thoughtful for a moment, and then began to talk to the Marquis.

They went away very early; these intimate friends were the only ones that she was at home to in these days of their mourning.

When she was lying in her bed that night all the agonies that she had felt in the country came back to her. She detailed them more fully, she verified them more clearly. She felt old! That evening for the first time she had understood that in her *salon,* where, until now, she had been the only one admired, complimented and *fêted,* her daughter would take her

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place. She had understood all at once in feeling the homage that had been paid to Annette. In this kingdom, the house of a beautiful woman, her kingdom, where she supported no umbrage, where she removed with a discreet and tenacious care all formidable comparisons, where she only allowed her equals to enter to try to make them her subjects, she saw clearly that her daughter would now become the sovereign.

How odd it was what she felt when all eyes turned to Annette, as Bertin held her by the hand standing beneath the picture! Every one looked at Annette, no one had turned to her. She had been so accustomed to hear compliments and flattery every time her guests looked at her portrait. She was so sure of the words of adulation, that she had come to take them as a matter of course, and scarcely took any notice, and yet all the same the words of praise were very sweet to her, and now this unexpected surrender had come, this falling off, this admiration given suddenly but entirely to her daughter. She was not jealous; it did not affect her at all in that way. She was no more moved than if it had been some trivial thing of no possible consequence. As she had one of those natures which after the critical moment — after the first despondency — react and find arguments of consolation, she thought that, once her dear child was married, when she no longer lived under the same roof, she would not have to support this incessant comparison, which was beginning to be too painful when Olivier was near. But only when he was near. However, the shock had been very strong this time.

During the night she was very feverish and scarcely slept; in the morning she awoke languid and depressed,

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and then she felt a great wish to be comforted, to be cured — to ask help from some one who could cure all her troubles and all her miseries, both moral and physical.

She felt really so ill, so altogether worn out that she decided to consult her doctor. Perhaps she was going to become very ill! It was not natural that she should pass through these successive stages of suffering and peace within so short a time of each other, so she sent a telegram to her physician and waited for him.

He arrived about 11 o'clock. He was one of those serious, high-class doctors whose decorations and titles guarantee their capacity, and whose *savoir-faire* equals at least the *simple savoir*. In the matter of feminine ailments he used a few tactful words that cured them more surely than any medicines. He entered the room, bowed, looked well at his patient, then said with a smile:

"*Allons! Madame.* It is nothing very serious. With eyes like yours one cannot be very ill."

That was a good beginning and she felt very grateful to him. She then told him all her ailments, her nervous attacks, the fits of melancholy, but she did not dwell on the fact that she was very worried about her looks. After he had listened to her attentively, merely asking a question about her appetite, as though he knew quite well the secret nature of this feminine complaint, he sounded her heart, examined her, felt the flesh on her shoulders with the tips of his fingers, took her arm on the palm of his hand and weighed it. He understood with the intuition of a physician who lifts up all veils that she was consulting him far more for her beauty than for her health.

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"Yes, we have here a case of anæmia," he said with his most professional air. "Nervous troubles. That is not astonishing, considering that you have just gone through a great sorrow. I am going to give you a little prescription that will put everything in good order. Above all, you must eat strengthening things; take the juice of meat, do not drink water, stop drinking wine, but drink plenty of beer. I can recommend an excellent brew. Do not tire yourself over anything, but walk as much as you can. Sleep well, and get fatter. That is all the advice I can give you, Madame, my beautiful client."

She had listened to him with the greatest attention, trying to find out if there was anything to really lay hold of.

She caught at his last phrase.

"Get fatter," she said. "Yes, I am too thin. Only a little while ago I was too stout, and probably I have weakened myself with dieting."

"Without doubt," answered the physician. "There is no harm in being thin if one has always been so, but when one gets thin on principle, it is always at the risk of something else. That, fortunately, is very quickly remedied. Good morning, Madame."

She felt better already, more active and hopeful. She sent a servant to order the beer for her luncheon, that he had recommended. She gave the man instructions to get it from the principal selling place, so as to have it fresher.

She was leaving the table when Bertin came in.

"Here I am again. It is always I," he said. "I have come to ask you something; have you anything to do this afternoon?"

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"No, nothing. Why?"

"And Annette?"

"Nothing, either."

"Then can you come to see me about four o'clock?"

"Yes, but what about?"

"I am sketching my figure of the *Rêverie,* the picture I spoke to you about when I asked you if you would let Annette pose for me. It will be doing me a great favor if I could have only one hour to-day. Will you?"

The Countess hesitated. She was uneasy, without knowing why. However, she replied:

"Yes, I can arrange it. We will be at the studio at four o'clock."

"Thanks, so much. You are amiability personified."

And he went off to prepare his canvas and to study his subject, so as not to tire his model too much.

Then the Countess went out alone, on foot, to finish her shopping. She walked down the Rue de la Paix and the Avenue de l'Opéra, and then returned to the Boulevard Malesherbes with slow steps; she had walked well and was now feeling tired out. As she passed Saint-Augustin's she was tempted to go into the church and rest. She pushed open the padded door and gave a sigh of relief at feeling the cool air of the vast nave; then she took a chair and sat down.

She was religious in the same way that many Parisians are. She believed in God without a doubt, not being able to admit the existence of the Universe without the existence of a Creator, but she associated, as most people do, the attributes of the Divinity with the nature of the motive created as her eyes saw it.

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She personified her Eternal Father according to what she knew of His work, without having for the foundation any clear ideas on what, in reality, could be the mysterious Creator. She believed firmly in religion, adored it theoretically, and feared it very vaguely, for she ignored in all conscience its intentions and its wills, having only a very limited confidence in the priests, whom she considered all as sons of peasants, who were recruits on duty in the Divine service.

Her father, who was a Parisian *bourgeois,* had not forced upon her any principles of religion. So until her marriage, she had observed its rites with a certain nonchalance. Then her new position regulated very strictly her apparent obligations towards the church, and she conformed with exactitude and punctuality to this light servitude. She was very much to the fore as patroness of several religious institutions and orphan asylums. She never missed the Sunday mass and helped the poor directly and indirectly through the medium of a priest, the vicar of her parish. She prayed often, as a matter of duty, in the same spirit that a soldier does his duty at the door of his commander. Sometimes she prayed because she was sad, especially when she suffered from Olivier's neglect. Without confiding in heaven, then, the cause of her supplications, treating God with the same naïve hypocrisy as her husband, she asked him to help her in her trouble. When her father died, and just recently when her mother died, she had had violent attacks of fervor, passionate supplications and outbursts towards Him who watches over and consoles us.

And here to-day in this church, where chance had brought her, she felt a great need of prayer, not a

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prayer for any one or for any thing, but for herself alone, as she had prayed at her mother's grave. She needed aid from somewhere and she called upon God now in the same manner that she had called upon her physician in the morning.

She stayed a long time on her knees in the silence of the church, which was broken now and again by quiet footsteps. Then suddenly, as though a clock had struck in her heart, she had an awakening of her thoughts. She pulled out her watch, started on seeing that it was four o'clock, and hurried home to fetch her daughter, whom Olivier was already awaiting.

When they arrived at the studio, they found the artist studying on the canvas the pose of his *Rêverie*. His wish was to reproduce exactly what he had seen in the Parc Monceau, when walking there with Annette — a poor girl dreaming, with an open book on her knees. He had greatly hesitated whether he should make her ugly or pretty. If ugly there would be more character; it would awaken more thoughts, more emotion, and contain more philosophy. If pretty, she would be more bewitching, diffuse more charm, and would please better. The wish to make a study after his little friend decided him. *Rêveuse* should be pretty and would consequently realize her poetical dream one day or the other, while the ugly one would be condemned to a dream only — without end, without hope.

As soon as the two came in the artist rubbed his hands with satisfaction and said:

"*Eh bien!* Mademoiselle Nané. You and I are going to work together, eh?"

The Countess seemed thoughtful. She sat down in

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a lounge chair and watched Olivier as he placed an iron garden chair in the light he wanted. He then opened his bookcase to look for a book. After hesitating a few minutes he turned to her and asked:

"What does your daughter read?"

"*Mon Dieu!* Just what you think. Give her a book by Victor Hugo."

"*La Légende des Siècles?*"

"Yes, that will do."

"*Petite,*" he said, turning to Annette, "sit down there and take this selection of verse, open at page . . . page 336. There you will find a piece called *Les Pauvres Gens.* Absorb it, drink in the words as one drinks the best of wine, gently, word by word, and let yourself be carried away by it; let yourself be moved by it. Listen, *petite,* to what your heart says to you. Then close the book, raise your eyes and think and dream. I am going to prepare my 'instruments of work' now." He went into a corner and triturated his palette. As he emptied on the fine wood the contents of the leaden tubes, which came out in thin, serpent-like twists of color, he turned round from time to time to look at the young girl, who was already interested in what she was reading.

As he looked at her his heart beat quickly, his fingers trembled, he forgot what he was doing and mixed the tones in blending the little pile of paste. A passionate emotion swept over him as he found himself before this black and blond apparition; in the same room, the same chair. After twelve years he stood before the resurrection of his past.

She had finished reading and her eyes were looking straight before her. As he went towards her he saw

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two tears in her eyes, which began to roll slowly down her cheeks. Then he shook with that strong emotion that makes a man forget himself entirely, and trembling he turned to the Countess.

"God! isn't she beautiful?" he said hoarsely. Then he remained stupefied as he saw the livid and convulsed face of Madame de Guilleroy. Her large eyes were full of a sort of terror. She looked at them both, her daughter and her lover. He went up to her, feeling vaguely uneasy.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"I want to speak to you," she said, gasping. She rose from her chair and turning to Annette she said quickly:

"Wait a moment, my child. I want to say a word to M. Bertin."

Then she walked quickly into the little room at the side, the little reception room, where he often made his visitors await him. He followed her, bewildered, not understanding at all. As soon as they were alone she grasped his two hands and said hoarsely:

"Olivier, Olivier, I implore you, do not let her pose any more."

He looked uneasy and asked:

"Why?"

"Why? Why?" she cried. "He asks why. My God! You do not understand why? *You. You.* God! Why didn't I see it sooner. I have only just discovered it. I can say nothing to you now — nothing. Fetch me my daughter. Tell her that I am ill, then order a carriage. I must go. You can come and call upon me in an hour's time. I will see you alone."

"But tell me what is the matter," he said.

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She was almost hysterical.

"Go," she said quickly. "Leave me. I cannot speak to you here. Fetch my daughter and order a carriage."

He was obliged to obey her, and returned to the studio. Annette, without suspicion, had commenced to read again; her heart had been made very sad by the poetic and lamentable story by the celebrated author.

"Your mother is not well," the artist said. "She was taken faint as she went into the little room. Go to her. I will get some smelling salts."

He went to his room and fetched a flacon of salts.

He found the mother and her child in each other's arms, crying — Annette overcome by the pathetic story of *Les Pauvres Gens,* let her tears flow freely, and the Countess, with great slow tears in her own eyes, tried to comfort her.

He waited a few minutes, not daring to speak, and watched them. He began to feel oppressed himself with an incomprehensible melancholy. At last he said:

"Well, do you feel better?"

"Yes, a little," replied the Countess. "It is nothing. Did you order the carriage?"

"Yes, it will be here presently."

"Thank you, *mon ami,* it is nothing. I have had too much grief lately."

A few minutes later a servant appeared to say the carriage was at the door.

And Bertin, full of uneasy thoughts, helped his friend, who was still very pale and feeble, down the stairs. As he held her arm he could feel her heart beating quickly beneath her bodice.

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When he was alone he asked himself, "What is the matter with her? Why this attack?" and he began to search for a reason, roaming around the truth without letting himself discover it. At last he approached it with hesitation.

"Surely she does not think that I am making love to her daughter," he said. "No! that would be too much."

And he fought against this supposed conviction with loyal and ingenious arguments; he became indignant that she could think that his sane and almost paternal affection for her daughter could have the appearance of any stronger sentiment. The more he thought of it the more annoyed he became with his friend; how dared she suspect him of such base, such unqualified infamy! He worked himself into a rage and he promised himself, when he called upon her presently, that he would express in strong terms exactly what he felt. He soon left the house to go to the Boulevard Malesherbes; he was impatient to have her explain.

As he walked along he thought with increasing impatience about just what he would say, the arguments and phrases which would justify him and avenge such a suspicion.

He found her lying on the sofa, her face lined with suffering.

"Well," he said dryly. "Kindly explain to me, my dear friend, the meaning of the strange scene a little while ago."

"What! You have not yet understood?" she said brokenly.

"No! I must confess."

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"*Voyons,* Olivier. Look well into your heart."

"Into my heart?"

"Yes. Into the depths of your heart."

"I do not understand; you must explain better."

"Search in the bottom of your heart and see if there is nothing that is dangerous for you and for me."

"I repeat to you," he said slowly, emphasizing each word, "*that I do not understand.* I know that there is something in your imagination, but in my conscience I can see nothing."

"I am not speaking of your conscience. I am speaking of your heart."

"I am not good at guessing enigmas. I beg of you to be more explicit."

Then slowly lifting her two hands, she took her friend's hands in hers and kept them, and said as if each word was tearing her heart:

"Take care, *mon ami,* or you will love my child."

He pulled his hands away roughly and with the indignation of one who is innocent and fights against a shameful accusation — with quick gestures and increasing excitement, he defended himself, and accused her in his turn for having such mean, such despicable suspicions.

She let him talk for a long time, but he could not convince her. She was sure of what she had said.

"I do not suspect you, my friend," she said at last. "You are ignorant of what is passing in you, just as I was ignorant of it until this morning. You are behaving to me now as if I had accused you of wishing to captivate Annette's heart. Oh! no! no! I know how loyal and worthy of all esteem and confidence you

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are. I only beg of you, I implore you, to look into the depths of your heart and see if the affection which you are beginning to have, in spite of yourself, for my daughter has not a character a little different from simple friendship."

He became angry and more and more agitated. He began again to plead his loyalty, as he had pleaded to himself in the street on his way to see her. She waited until he had finished, then, without anger or any excitement whatever, but deathly pale, she said:

"Olivier, I know all that you say to me and I think the same as you. I know you are loyal, but I am sure I am not making a mistake. Listen, reflect, and understand, *mon ami*. My daughter resembles me too much. She is just like what I was when you commenced to love me, so much so that you are beginning to love her also."

"Then," he cried, "you dare to throw in my face such a thing on the mere supposition of this ridiculous argument — *he loves me, my daughter resembles me — he will get to love her.*"

But seeing that the Countess became more and more deathlike, he continued in a quieter tone:

"Do not be so absurd, my dear Any; it is simply because I find *you* in *her* that the child pleases me so much. It is you and you only that I love, dear, when I look at her."

"Yes, that is why I am commencing to suffer so much, and that is why I am filled with dread. You have not yet analyzed your feelings, but very soon you will not be able to deceive yourself," replied the Countess sadly.

"Any, you must be mad to think such a thing."

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"Do you require some proofs?" she asked.

"Yes."

"In spite of all my persuasions you have not been to Roncières for three years, but you rushed down quickly enough when the proposition was made that you should fetch us."

"*Ah! par exemple!* You reproach me with not having left you alone down there, knowing that you were so sick after your mother's death."

"Very well. I will not argue the matter. But here again — your wish to see Annette is so imperative that you could not let even to-day pass without asking me to take her to your home under the pretext of posing for you."

"And you did not imagine that it was you whom I called to see?"

"You are now arguing against yourself; you are trying to convince yourself that it is so, but you cannot deceive me. Listen again. Why did you leave the house so abruptly last evening, when the Marquis de Farandal came in the room? Do you know?"

He hesitated, very surprised. Why had he left? He was beginning to feel strangely uneasy. He was disarmed by this observation. Then he said hesitatingly:

"Well . . . I scarcely know . . . I was tired, and then to be perfectly frank with you — that big imbecile annoys me."

"Since when?"

"Always."

"Pardon me, *mon ami,* but I used to hear you praise him very warmly. You liked him once upon a time. Be perfectly sincere, Olivier."

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"Well, it is possible that the great tenderness which I have for you makes me like all who belong to you, so much so as to modify my opinion on that conceited prig. It was all right when I met him at the club occasionally, but I get annoyed when I see him at your house almost every day."

"My daughter's house will not be mine," said the Countess quietly. "That will be sufficient. I know your high principles, and I know that you will think over seriously what I have said to you. When you fully understand you will see that I have pointed out to you a great danger while there is time for you to escape it. And you will take care. Let us talk of something else now," she concluded as she lay back weakly on the sofa.

He did not attempt to discuss the subject farther. He was thoroughly uneasy, not knowing what to think; he needed to be alone to be able to reflect. After they had talked on other matters for a quarter of an hour he left her.

CHAPTER IV

WITH slow steps Olivier Bertin returned home. He was disturbed and worried, as though he had just learned a shameful family secret. He tried to sound his heart, so as to see things clearly,—he tried to read the intimate pages of the interior book, those pages which are stuck so closely one to another, that oftentimes it is the hand of a stranger which separates and turns them over for us.

Most assuredly he did not think he was in love with Annette! The Countess, whose annoying jealousy was

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always on the alert, had anticipated this danger, and had signaled it before it existed.

But this peril, *might* it exist to-morrow, next week, next month? It was to this sincere question that he tried to give a sincere answer. It was true, the *petite* stirred his tender feelings, but then those feelings were so numerous with a man that one ought not to confuse the offensive with the inoffensive. In this same tender manner he was fond of animals, especially cats. He could not look at their silky fur without being seized with an irresistible, almost sensual, wish to caress them; he loved to run his fingers over their soft and undulating back, and stroke and kiss their hair, which was so full of electricity.

The attraction which drew him to the young girl resembled, a little, these obscure and innocent desires, which are a part of all the incessant and unappeasable vibrations of the human nerves.

His eye of an artist and also his eye of a man, were beguiled by her freshness, by the blossoming of her young, clear life, by the sap of youth which radiated from her; and his heart being so full of reminiscences of his long friendship with her mother, found in the extraordinary likeness of Annette to the Countess a recall of old emotions,—emotions which had slept almost since the commencement of his love, and which had perhaps been shaken under the sensation of an awakening! Yes! that was it. This idea pleased him. He felt that he was now awake after years of sleep. If he had loved the child without suspecting it he would have felt when near her that animation of the entire being which makes a man different the moment that the flame of a new desire is alight. No,

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this *petite* had only blown the old fire into a flame. It was still the mother, and the mother only, that he loved, and without a doubt a little more than he did before, on account of her daughter,— of this apparition who had come to them from the past. And he formulated this statement by this reassuring sophism, "One can love but once." The heart can be moved many times, when meeting another being, because each one exercises on another either an attraction or a repulsion. From all these influences are born friendships, fancies, the desire for possession — the quick and fleeting passion — but not true love. For real love to exist the two beings must be born for each other, they must be drawn to each other by so many tastes that they must have in common, by so much affinity of the flesh, of the mind, of the character, and feel themselves bound by things of all nature, that it forms a rope of attachments. In short, that which one loves is not so much Mrs. X. or Mr. Z. . . . It is a *woman,* or a *man,* a creature without name, who has come from Nature, that wonderful female, with organs, a heart, a soul, who, like a magnet, attracts our organs, our eyes, our lips, our heart and our thought, all our sensual and intelligent appetites. One likes a certain type — that is to say, we like in one person a reunion of all the human qualities which can separately seduce us in the others.

For the artist, Madame de Guilleroy had been this type, and the duration of their friendship, of which he had not grown weary, had proved this to him in a convincing manner. Then Annette physically resembled what her mother had been, even to deceiving the eyes, so in that case it was not astonishing that his

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man's heart should be caught a little, without sweeping him away. He had loved a woman. Another was born of her — her image. He could not really defend himself from carrying back to the second a light, affectionate remnant of the passionate attachment which he had had for the first. There was nothing wrong in that. His look and his memory had only been illusioned by this apparent resurrection; but his instinct had not led him into any error, for he had never felt for the young girl the least confusion of a sensual desire.

But then the Countess accused him of being jealous of the Marquis. Was it true? He made another severe examination of his conscience, and admitted that it was true; he really was a little jealous. But after all, that was not astonishing. Isn't one often jealous of men who make love to a woman, no matter who the woman is? Hasn't one sometimes felt, when in the street, in a restaurant, or at a theater, a little enmity against the man who brushes by or who comes into the room where you are with a beautiful girl clinging to his arm? Every man who possesses a woman is a rival. He is a satisfied male, a conqueror whom the other males envy. And then, without entering into the consideration of physiology, if it was normal that he had a sympathy for Annette that was a little overwrought by his tenderness for her mother, was it not then natural that he felt grow up in him a slight animosity against her future husband? Why, it was perfectly natural! However, he would try to overcome this bad feeling which he had for the youth. In his innermost thoughts, there still existed a bitter discontent against himself and the Countess. Their every-day

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relations would be embarrassing, now she had these suspicions. He would have to watch with scrupulous and tiring attention his every word, act, and look, every attitude that he took towards the young girl, because everything that he might do, everything he might say, would be suspected by the mother. When he arrived at his home he was in a thoroughly bad temper, and commenced to smoke cigarettes in the manner of a man whose nerves are irritated, who in his nervousness uses ten matches to light one smoke. In vain he tried to work. His hand, his eye, and his mind seemed unaccustomed to painting. It was as though he had forgotten how to use the brush, as though he had never known or practiced his art.

Finally he took a little canvas that had been commenced — a corner of a street where a blind woman was singing. He looked at it with an insuperable indifference, with such a powerlessness to continue it that he sat before it, his palette in his hand, and then forgot it, but all the time he was looking at it with a searching and attentive fixity.

Then the impatience of the time, which seemed to stand still, the interminable minutes, began to torment his intolerable feverishness.

Until his dinner, which he would take at the club, what should he do? since it was impossible to work. The idea of walking on the boulevards tired him in advance,— the streets, the people, the carriages, the shops filled him with disgust, and the thought of making a visit to no matter whom, made him take an instantaneous dislike to all the people he knew.

What should he do then? He walked to and fro in his studio; at each turn he looked at the clock,

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whose hands were displaced by a few seconds. How well he knew this beat from the door to the cabinet full of curios and back again. He had tramped it so often — in moments of tense excitement, of warmth, of animation, at the flight of his imagination, at the zenith of his success, at the execution of fertile and easy work,— it was a delightful recreation, this walk to and fro in the gay warm studio; then in the hours of powerlessness and discouragement, in the miserable hours when nothing seemed to be worth an effort or a movement, it was the execrable tramp of a prisoner in his cell. If only he could sleep, if he could sleep just one hour on the divan! But it was impossible. He had worked himself into such an agitated state that he was trembling with exasperation. But why had he gotten into this sudden access of rage?

"This is absurd," he said viciously to his reflection in the mirror, "to have put myself into this violent state for such a ridiculous, insignificant cause. Bah!"

Then he thought he would take a book. The volume of the "*Légende des Siècles*" was still on the chair where Annette had left it; he opened it and read two pages of verse, but he could not see any meaning to it. He understood no more what he was reading than as if it had been written in a foreign language. He turned back the pages and began again, to see if it was really impossible for him to grasp the sense.

"*Allons bon!*" he said, after a vain effort. "I suppose my brain has gone on a vacation."

Suddenly an inspiration came to him as to the best way to pass these two hours before dinner. He ordered a warm bath, and he stayed in it stretched out, relieved and soothed; he laid there dreaming in the

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warm water, until his valet brought his linen and awoke him from his half sleep.

When he arrived at the club he found his usual companions there. He was received with exclamations and open arms, for no one had seen him for several days.

"I have been in the country," he explained. All the men, with the exception of the landscape painter, Maldant, professed a profound contempt for the fields and the woods. Rocdiane and Landa went into the country, it was true, but only for the shooting. When on the moors and in the woods they only felt the pleasure of seeing the partridges, pheasants and quails fall beneath their shots, looking like tatters of feathers, or watching the little startled rabbits turning over on their heads, like clowns, five or six times in succession, and showing as they cut their capers the mesh of white hairs on their tail. Outside of this autumn and winter sport, they considered the country tame. Rocdiane remarked: "*Je préfère les petites femmes aux petits pois.*"

The dinner was the same as usual — noisy and jovial; they had some discussions, but nothing unforeseen burst out. Bertin, to forget himself, talked a great deal; his companions found him even more amusing than usual, but as soon as he had finished his coffee and played sixty points at billiards with Banker Liverdy he left them. He strolled along the boulevards, then round the Madeleine and the rue Taitbout, passed three times before the Vaudeville, wondering whether he should go in, stopped a cab to take him to the Hippodrome, then changed his mind, walked towards the Nouveau-Cirque, then abruptly made a half turn without premeditation — for no reason whatever, and

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walked quickly up the Boulevard Malesherbes, slackening his pace as he neared Madame de Guilleroy's home.

"She will perhaps think it singular that I have come back again to-night," he said to himself. Then he reassured himself by thinking that there was nothing astonishing in calling a second time to ask how she was.

She was alone with Annette in the little *salon* at the end. They were again sitting under the rose lamp light working at the coverlet for the poor.

When he came in the room she said simply: "*Tiens!* it is you, *mon ami!*"

"Yes! I was anxious. I wanted to see you. How are you this evening? Feeling better, I hope?"

"Thanks, I am very well."

She waited a moment and then said, with marked intention:

"And you?"

He laughed carelessly and replied:

"Oh! I, I am very well — very well, indeed. Your fears were entirely without foundation."

She stopped knitting and raised her eyes and looked at him. An ardent look full of prayer and doubt.

"It is quite true," he said.

"So much the better," she replied with a smile that was a little forced.

He sat down, and for the first time in her house he felt ill at ease; there came again that sort of paralysis of ideas, but this time more complete than that which had gripped him in the afternoon as he stood before his canvas.

The Countess turned to her daughter. "You can continue, my child. It will not annoy M. Bertin."

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"What was she doing?" he asked.

"She was studying a *fantaisie*."

Annette got up and went to the piano. Without thinking, his eye followed her, as it always did when he thought how pretty she was. Then he felt the mother's gaze upon him, and he turned his head quickly, as though he had been looking at something in the dim corners of the *salon*.

The Countess took up a little gold case from her work-table. It was a present he had given her. She opened it and offered him some cigarettes.

"Smoke, *mon ami*, you know I like it when we are alone here."

He obeyed. And Annette began to play her *fantaisie*.

It was old music — light and rippling, one of those soft airs that seem to have been inspired to the composer by a quiet moonlight evening in springtime.

"Whose is that?" Olivier asked.

"It is Schumann. It is little known, but it is very charming."

He wanted so to turn and look at Annette, but he did not dare. Just a slight movement, only a turn of his neck, and he could see her. Where he was sitting he could see at the side the light from the piano candles in the alcove, but he knew well that the Countess was watching him, so he sat motionless with eyes raised before him, seemingly interested in the wreath of gray smoke that he blew from his cigarette.

"That is all you have to say to me?" murmured Madame de Guilleroy.

He smiled.

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"You must not want more for the moment," he said. "You know that music hypnotizes me, it drinks my thoughts. I will speak soon."

"*Tiens!*" she said. "Before mother died I was studying something for you. I have never let you hear it, but I will play it soon, when the *petite* has finished; you see if it is not a weird thing."

She was a very talented musician. She had a subtle comprehension of emotion, which ran through her notes. In this accomplishment she had one of her surest powers over the painter's feelings.

As soon as Annette had finished her sylvan symphony by Schumann, the Countess got up and took her place at the piano. As her fingers glided over the keys a strange wild melody filled the room — a melody in which all the phrases seemed some plaint — different plaints — numerous and changing, interrupted by a unique note, now dying away, now returning with a weird cry, falling in the midst of a light air, cutting it, scathing and shattering it, like a monotonous incessant cry of distress, the unappeased call of a struggling soul.

But Olivier was looking at Annette, who was sitting opposite to him, and he heard nothing. He had not understood the glorious music. He was looking at the child without thinking; his eyes were devouring her, it was as if he had been deprived of an habitual and good thing. He drank her in wholesomely, like one drinks a draught of clear fresh water when one is thirsty.

"*Eh bien!*" said the Countess. "Isn't it beautiful?"

"Admirable, superb; whose is it?" he cried waking up.

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"You don't know?" she asked in surprise.

"No."

"You don't really know?"

"No."

"Why, it is Schubert's."

"That doesn't surprise me," he said with an air of strong conviction. "It is simply superb. Do be kind and play it over gain."

She played again, and again he turned his head to look at Annette, but now he listened to the music, so as to taste two pleasures at the same time.

When Madame de Guilleroy came back to her seat he simply obeyed the natural duplicity of man, and was careful not to let his eyes rest on the young girl's profile as she sat knitting opposite her mother on the other side of the lamp. But, although he did not see her, he felt the joy of her presence, like when one is cold and one feels the nearness of a warm fire. The wish to cast at her some rapid furtive glances and bring them back quickly to the mother tormented him; he was like a schoolboy who wants to clamber up to the window to look quickly down the street while the teacher's back is turned.

He went away early for his words seemed as paralyzed as his mind, and his persistent silence might be interpreted wrongly. As soon as he was in the street he felt like wandering about; he had no wish to return to his lonely home. All music that he heard remained with him for a long time, throwing him into a reverie, which seemed to carry on the dream where the melody left off. As he wandered along, the beautiful chant of the wild notes came back to him — intermittent and fleeting — bringing some solitary lonely measures in its

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train — distant as a far-away echo, then they were quiet, seeming to leave with the thoughts they had conjured up a reason for their coming, for the thoughts soared away in their flight to the Dream, traveling on in search of the tender Ideal. He turned to the left of the boulevard, and when he saw the beautiful little Parc Morceau he went into the central *allée*, which was brilliantly lit up by the electric lights. A guard walked by with slow steps, now and again a cab passed, a man sat on a bench reading a newspaper, bathed in the blue pale light thrown from the shining globe on the summit of the bronze pillar. Other focuses on the grass, in among the trees, reflected in the foliage and on the lawns their cold and powerful light, giving a pale-clear life to this large town garden.

Bertin walked along with his hands behind his back, thinking of the promenade he had had with Annette, here in this same park, when he had heard her speak with her mother's voice. He sat down on one of the benches, and breathed the fresh odors of the watered lawns. He felt coming upon him all the passionate hopes which form in the soul of the adolescent the vague groundwork of an infinite romance of love. When he was young he had often known this kind of evening — an evening of wandering fantasy, when he had let his thoughts soar away in imaginary adventures, and he marveled that he felt this return of sensations which were no more of his age.

But just as the persistent note of Schubert's melody had stayed with him, so the thought of Annette, the vision of her fair face and blonde head bent under the lamplight, and the strange suspicions of the Countess clung to him.

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In spite of all he could do this subject seemed to occupy his heart, to probe the impenetrable depths where the germs of the human sentiments lie before they are born. This obstinate search troubled him; this constant pre-occupation of the young girl seemed to open in his heart a route of tender reveries; he could not banish them from his memory; he carried with him a sort of evocation of her, like in the days that had passed; when her mother had left him he had kept within the walls of his studio the strange sensation of her presence.

He became impatient with this dominating remembrance. He got up from his seat and shook himself.

"Any was stupid to tell me that," he muttered. "I can think of nothing but the child now."

He went to his home feeling strangely uneasy. He laid awake in his bed; the sleep that he sought would not come to him, for the fever ran in his veins, the sap of the Dream fermented in his heart. Dreading a sleepless night — one of those nervous, sleepless nights provoked by the agitation of the soul — he thought he would take a book and read. Many times a little reading served him as a narcotic. So he got out of bed and went to the book-case to choose a good and soporific work. But his mind was wide awake and in spite of himself eager with a keen emotion, and he looked on the rows of books for the name of a writer who could respond to his state of exultation and hope.

Olivier adored Balzac, but he was useless now; he turned in disdain from Hugo; he looked contemptuously at Lamartine, who, however, always moved him strongly, and then he fell eagerly on Musset, the poet of the young. He took a volume and carried it to bed

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with him. At first he began to read snatches here and there, then he drank in with the thirst of a drunkard the verses of one inspired, who, like a bird singing of the dawn of life and only having breath for the morning song, is quieted before the brutal day has come.

He read greedily these verses of a poet who was above all a man intoxicated with life, who threw off his emotions in flourishes of sparkling and naïve love, echoes of all the young hearts which were maddened by love and passionate desires.

Never before had Bertin so thoroughly understood the physical charm of these poems, that charm which excites our senses, but scarcely stirs our intelligence. With eyes on the emotional verses he felt again as though he were twenty years of age, all filled with hope and longing, and he read on almost to the end of the book, drunk with a boyish sensuality.

The clock struck three. He was astonished that he had felt no desire for sleep. He got up to put the book back in the book-case and to close the window, but the contact of the fresh night air brought back the old pains, which his seasons at Aix had not cured; they ran through his joints, making him writhe for the moment; it seemed like a recall — like a warning, and he threw the book down on the table with an impatient movement.

"You old fool, go to bed," he murmured. Then he put out his light and retired.

He did not go the next day to see the Countess, and he went so far as to take the energetic resolution of not calling before two days. But no matter what he did, whether trying to paint or taking a walk, or trailing

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his melancholy way from house to house, he was everywhere tormented by the incessant thoughts of the two women. Having resolved not to go and see them, he consoled himself with thinking of them, and he let his thoughts and his heart be wrapped up with the remembrance of them. So often in this sort of hallucination with which he soothed his loneliness, the two figures came and drew near together — two different faces as he knew them — they passed one before the other, mingled and blended together, making only one face, which seemed a little vague to him, for it was no longer the face of the mother or that of the child — but the face of a woman passionately loved long ago, now and always.

Then he felt a remorse that he had given himself up so wholly to these thoughts. He was standing on the slope of this tenderness which was beginning to be so powerful and dangerous. To escape from it, to be delivered from this sweet dream, he tried to turn his thoughts to all imaginable ideas, towards all subjects of reflection and of possible meditation. Vain effort! All the roads of distraction that he took led him back to the same point, where he met a young, fair face which seemed to lay in ambush waiting for him. It was a vague and inevitable obsession, floating around him, turning round before him and stopping him. He tried to flee from it, but no matter through what by-ways and winding alleys he went, it was there. The confusion of these two beings who had so strangely moved him on the evening of their walk in the park at Roncières stirred his memory, as ceasing to reflect and reason, he evoked them, striving to understand that singular emo-

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tion that had stirred his flesh. "*Voyons!*" he muttered, "have I more feeling for Annette than I ought to have?"

Then, ransacking his heart, he felt it burning with affection for a woman quite young, who had all Annette's features, but who was not quite her. And, coward-like, he reassured himself by thinking: "No, I do not love the child, but I am the victim of her resemblance."

All the same, the two days that he had passed at Roncières remained in his thoughts like a source of warm happiness, of intoxication, and the smallest details came back to him one by one, more precise, more delicious than at the hour itself. Then, following the course of these memories, he again saw the lane where they walked when returning from the cemetery, the bunches of flowers the young girl had gathered, and he suddenly remembered that he had promised her a cornflower in sapphires as soon as they returned to Paris.

All his resolutions flew to the winds, and without a struggle he took his hat and went out, stirred by the thought of the pleasure that he was going to give her.

"Madame la Comtesse is out, but Mademoiselle is at home, monsieur," said the Guilleroy footman as he opened the door in answer to his ring.

He felt a quick rush of joy.

"Tell her I should like to speak to her," he said. And when he went into the *salon* it was with soft, stealthy steps, as though he was afraid of being heard.

Annette appeared almost at once.

"*Bonjour, cher maître,*" she said with gravity.

He laughed as he shook hands with her and sat down beside her.

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"Guess why I came?" he said.

She thought for a few seconds.

"I cannot," she said, shaking her head.

"To take you and your mother to the jeweler's to choose the cornflower in sapphires that I promised you at Roncières."

Her face beamed with happiness.

"Oh!" she said, "and mama has gone out, but she will be back soon. You will wait for her, won't you?"

"Yes, if she is not too long."

"Oh, what insolence! Too long with me. You treat me as a child."

"No," he said, "not so much as you think."

He felt a great desire to please her, to be gay and witty, like he had been in the most lively days of his youth; one of those instinctive wishes that over-excite all the faculties of seduction, that desire that makes the peacock spread its tail and strut about, and the poet blazon forth his verses. The phrases came to his lips — quick and brilliant — he spoke as he did when at his best.

The *petite*, delighted by this animation, replied with all the archness — with all the future roguery and wit that was beginning to bud in her.

Suddenly, as they were debating a question, he cried out:

"But you have already said that to me many times. I told you . . ."

She burst out laughing. It was the first time he had said "vous" to her.

"*Tiens!*" she said "so it is 'vous' now, you no longer 'tutoyez' me. You take me for mama."

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He crimsoned and remained silent a moment, then stammered:

"Your mother has already favored this idea hundreds of times."

But his eloquence died a quick death. He had nothing more to say, and he began to be afraid now; he had an incomprehensible fear of this little girl.

"Here is mama," she said.

She had heard the door of the outer *salon* open, and Olivier, troubled as though he had been found guilty of a fault, explained to Madame de Guilleroy how he had suddenly remembered the promise he had made at Roncières, and how he had come to fetch them both to go to the jeweler's.

"I have a *coupé*," he said. "I will sit on the bracket seat."

They started and a few minutes later arrived at Montara's. Olivier Bertin had passed all his life in the intimacy, the observation, the study and the affection of women; he had always occupied himself about them and consequently had been obliged to discover their tastes. He knew the fashions as well as they did; he was *au courant* on all matters of dress, and all the small details of their private existence, and so, in a certain measure, he had partaken somewhat of their sensations, and he always experienced, when going into one of these shops, where the charming and delicate accessories of their beauty are displayed, a feeling of pleasure almost equal to what they felt. He was interested in all the little dainty "nothings" with which they adorned themselves. Beautiful stuffs and exquisite laces pleased his eye, the most insignificant elegant bauble held his attention. In the jeweler's shop, when he

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looked in the *vitrines*, he felt a sort of religious respect, like before a sanctuary of rich enticements; and the bureau of dark cloth where the goldsmith's skillful fingers turned over the precious stones with their dazzling reflex imposed a certain esteem.

When the Countess and her daughter were seated before this severe piece of furniture, where both of them posed their hands by a natural movement, he indicated what he wanted and they were shown some designs of small flowers. Next the sapphires were laid out for them to choose from. This took a long time. The two women turned them over on the cloth with the tips of their fingers, then took them up carefully, flashed them in the light, and examined them with a keen and careful attention. When they had selected them and put them on one side the emeralds were brought out; they had three to choose for the leaves and a tiny diamond, which was to glitter in the center like a dewdrop.

The joy of giving was making Olivier quite excited. He turned to the Countess and said eagerly:

"Now, you will give me the pleasure of choosing two rings, will you not, Countess?"

"I?"

"Yes. One for you and one for Annette. Let me give you these little gifts as a remembrance of the two days passed at Roncières."

She refused. He insisted. A long discussion followed — a battle of words and arguments, in which he came out the victor, although not without great trouble.

Some rings were brought to them. Some were very rare, in special cases, others were arranged according to the style in large square boxes, where they showed in

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lines on the velvet all the fanciful designs of their bezels.

The painter was seated between the two women, and he began with the same eagerness as they to pick up one by one the gold circlets from the thin slits which held them. He handed them to the Countess and her daughter for them to examine, and they made them into two piles, those that were rejected at first sight and those from which they might choose.

The time passed quickly and happily in the fascinating task of selecting — more captivating to women than any other pleasure.

They made comparisons and then got a little excited, and finally the choice of the three judges, after a great deal of hesitation, fell on a little serpent of gold which held a beautiful ruby between its thin mouth and twisted tail.

Olivier got up from his seat radiant with pleasure.

"I will leave you my carriage," he said. "I have some things to attend to, so I am off."

Annette begged her mother to walk home, as the day was so beautiful. The Countess agreed, and having thanked Bertin and wished him good-bye the two women walked off down the street together. They walked along in silence for some time, contentedly happy with the presents they had received; then they began to talk about the lovely jewels they had seen and handled; in their minds there remained a sort of flashing, a kind of jingling and gayety. They walked quickly along the crowded boulevards. It was five o'clock and the crowd had come out to stroll along the *trottoir*.

Several men in a group turned to look at Annette, and murmured as they passed some vague words of admiration.

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It was the first time since they had been in mourning, since the sombre garments had brought out so vividly the brilliancy of Annette's beauty, that the Countess had walked out with her in Paris. This sensation of the success of the street, the attention which she excited, these whispered compliments, this little whirl of emotion which a beautiful woman passing by leaves in a crowd of men, tightened the Countess' heart little by little, compressing it under the same painful feeling as the other evening in the *salon*, when they compared the *petite* with her own likeness. Against her own wish and dignity she watched these looks that Annette attracted. She felt them coming from afar. She felt them look at her own face and pass, then suddenly fix on the fair face beside her. She saw in these glances the quick and silent homage to this blossoming youth, to the charm which her freshness attracted, and she thought with a touch of despairing bitterness:

"And I was once as beautiful as Annette, if not more so."

She was seized as at Roncières by an imperious wish to get away from all. She did not want to feel that she was in the brightness of the crowded boulevards in view of all these men who did not look at her. The days were far off, and yet so near, when she sought and called forth a parallel with her daughter. But who to-day among all the people they had seen would think of comparing them. One only had thought of it perhaps, a little while ago at the jeweler's. He! Oh, what suffering!

How could he help being beset by this comparison? How was it possible for him to see them together without thinking and dreaming of the time when she was

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so beautiful and youthful and had gone to his home so sure of being loved by him.

"I am not feeling well; we will take a cab, my child," she said to her daughter.

Annette looked at her mother anxiously. "What is it, mother? Tell me," she said quickly, as she drew her mother's arm through hers.

"It is nothing, dear. You know since your grandmama died I have often felt this weakness."

CHAPTER V

FIXED ideas have sometimes the gnawing tenaciousness of an incurable illness. Once they find entrance in a mind they devour it, they do not leave it the freedom of thinking of anything or the ability to take an interest in the smallest thing.

No matter what the Countess did at home or elsewhere, alone or surrounded by her friends, she could not throw off the thought that had seized her when returning home side by side with her daughter.

How could Olivier help comparing them when he saw them together almost every day? He would be obliged to do it in spite of himself; he would be haunted incessantly by the remembrance of what had been. Each time he came she thought at once of this comparison; she read it in his looks, she knew it and commented on it in her head and in her heart, and so she was tortured by the desire to hide herself, never to show herself to him when her daughter was near. She suffered, besides, in every way; she no longer felt that she was at home in her own house. The wounding dispossession that she had felt the evening when all eyes looked

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at Annette beside her portrait grew stronger and at times exasperated her.

She reproached herself continually and bitterly for having the secret wish to be free of her daughter, the unavoidable wish to make her leave her home as though she was an embarrassing and tenacious guest, and she worked on almost unconsciously, gripped by the necessity to struggle and fight so as to still keep, in spite of all, the man whom she loved.

She could not hasten Annette's marriage too much, because their recent mourning had forced her to put off the thought of it for a while, and she began to be afraid, with a confused and strong fear, that something might happen that would stop it altogether; and she tried, although almost against her will, to instill into Annette's heart a love for the Marquis. All the diplomatic ruses that for so long she had employed so as to keep Olivier now took a new form — a more delicate, keener and secretive form, and she exerted herself in every way to make the two young people happy when they were together, and she took the utmost precaution that the two men should not meet each other.

On account of the painter's working habits he seldom lunched outside, and as a rule only gave his evenings to his friends; so Madame de Guilleroy often invited the Marquis to luncheon. He would come in after horse-back riding, bringing in with him a sort of fresh breeze of the morning air. He talked to them gayly on the society doings which seemed to float every day on the autumnal awakening of the brilliant and *hippique* Paris in the *allées* of the Bois de Bolougne.

Annette was amused, listening to his lively talk. She liked these days and began to look forward to his com-

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ing. He brought with him all the freshness and elegance of the gay world. So, in the course of time, this juvenile intimacy established between them an affectionate companionship. Their passionate love for horses gave them a taste in common and naturally strengthened their friendship. When he left the house both the Count and Countess adroitly sang his praises; they showed up all his good qualities and gave their daughter to understand that it depended solely upon her to marry him if he pleased her.

And besides, Annette had understood very quickly and the Countess had no reason to feel anxious regarding her sentiments. The young girl reasoned frankly, judging it to be quite a simple matter to take such a handsome youth for her husband — one who would give her among other good things what she preferred most of all — a gallop in the Bois every morning beside him on a thoroughbred.

And so one day quite naturally he became her fiancé. They settled their engagement after a handshake and a smile, and then began to talk of their marriage as if it had been decided a long time. Thenceforth the Marquis began to bring her beautiful presents and the Duchess treated her as though she were her daughter.

And so this affair, which was so dear to the heart of the Duchess and M. and Madame de Guilleroy, had been brought about and warmed by a common accord on a little fire of intimacy during the calm hours of the day, for the Marquis had many other social obligations and duties, and he rarely called in the evening. Then it was Olivier's turn. Each week he dined regularly with his friends, and often appeared unexpectedly to take tea with them between ten o'clock and midnight.

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As soon as he came in the Countess watched him. She was gnawed by the wish to know what was passing in his heart. He had not a look or a movement that she did not interpret at once, and she was tortured by this thought: "It is impossible that he does not love her, seeing us both one after the other."

He also brought presents. Not a week passed without him bringing two little parcels. One he offered to the mother, the other to the daughter; and as the Countess opened the box, which often contained some precious bauble, she felt a dull pain at her heart. She knew so well how he loved to give presents, his wish to bring something just to give pleasure. He loved to go to the shops and buy something for some one — to find a pretty trinket that would please some one. In the days that had gone the painter had passed through this stage of giving. She had seen him enter her home many times with the same smile, the same gesture, a little parcel in his hand. After a time this fever of giving presents had calmed down; it had stopped gradually, and now it was beginning again. For whom? She did not for a moment delude herself on the matter. It was not for her.

Bertin had become very thin. He seemed always tired. So she knew he was suffering. She compared his ways and behavior with the attitude of the Marquis, whom Annette's beauty and grace was beginning to move also. It was not the same thing. M. de Farandal was fascinated by her and she pleased him, but Olivier loved her. She thought so, at least, during these hours of torment; but during her moments of calm she hoped she had made a mistake.

When she was alone with him she wanted so often to

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question him — to beg and implore him to speak and tell her all — to hide nothing from her. She would rather have known and wept under the certitude than to suffer under this doubt and not be able to read his closed heart, where she felt another love was growing.

She clung to this heart more than her life. She had watched over it and warmed and animated it for twelve years; she had felt sure of it, she had hoped definitely that she had acquired, conquered and brought it to subjection by her passionate devotion, and that it would be hers until the end of their days. And how it was escaping her by an inconceivable, horrible and monstrous fatality! It had suddenly closed up, it was guarding a secret. She could no longer penetrate it by a familiar word. She could not gather her love together in a lump and take it to him like to a faithful retreat that was open to her only. Why does one love? What good is love? What use is it for a woman to give herself suddenly without reserve to a man — to give her entire being, her entire life, all that she has in the world? What is the use of this if it escapes you when another face pleases him and in a few days you become almost a stranger?

A stranger! He! Olivier? He spoke to her as he always did, with the same words, the same voice, the same tone, and yet something had come between them, something inexplicable, unseizable, invincible, almost nothing, this almost nothing that can make a veil blow far away when the wind has turned.

He was surely getting farther away — farther away from her, just a little more every day, she could tell when she saw him looking at Annette.

He himself did not now try to look into his own

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heart. He could feel now this fermentation of love — this compelling attraction — but he did not wish to understand it; he committed himself to fate — to the unexpected chances of life.

He lived for the evenings he spent with these two women, who were separated by their bereavement from all social life. He never met any one now but the Corbelles and Musadieu at their home. It seemed to him that he was alone with them in the world, and as he no longer saw the Duchess and her nephew, who only visited them in the mornings and afternoons, he wanted to forget them altogether. He was hoping that the marriage had been put off indefinitely.

Annette never spoke of M. de Farandal before him. Was it by a sort of instinctive shyness, or perhaps by one of those secret intuitions of a woman's heart, which makes her have a presentiment of something which she ignores.

The weeks followed the weeks without anything changing this life. The end of the autumn had come, bringing with it the opening of Parliament, which was earlier than usual on account of political rumors. To-day was the opening of the session and M. de Guilleroy was going to take the Duchess, her nephew and Annette with him after luncheon to the Chamber of Deputies. The Countess had decided to stay at home; she felt apart from them all in her ever-growing sorrow.

They had left the table and were taking the coffee in the drawing room. The young people were very gay. The Count was happy at the thought of going back to his parliamentary duties — his only pleasure. He spoke almost with spirit of the present situation and the perplexity of the government; the Marquis,

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who was decidedly in love, talked with warmth on the political questions of the day, looking at Annette all the while, and the Duchess was equally happy. She was as pleased to know that her nephew was really in love as she was to learn that the Republic was in distress.

The air of the drawing room was warm with the first concentrated heat of the re-lit *calorifères,* there was a warmth from the curtains, the carpets and the walls, and throughout the room there was the heavy odor of hothouse flowers. There was in this close room, where the coffee also diffused its aroma, something that was distinctly home-like, an air of intimacy and familiarity and of enjoyment, when the door opened and Olivier Bertin stood on the threshold.

He stood there so much amazed that he hesitated to walk in. He was astonished like a husband who has been deceived and looks upon his wife's crime. Confused anger and a powerful emotion suffocated him, and then he knew that his heart had become worm-eaten with love.

All that they had hidden from him and all that he had hidden from himself appeared to him when he saw the Marquis installed in this house as a fiancé. As if awakening from a sleep with a start, he now fathomed all that he did not wish to know and all that they did not dare say. He no longer asked himself why they had hidden from him all these preparations of the marriage. He guessed it, and his eyes hardened as he looked at the Countess, who bent to hide her crimson face. She and he understood each other, but they restrained themselves.

After he sat down there was a silence for a moment; his unexpected entrance seemed to have paralyzed the

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scope of their minds. Then the Duchess began to talk, but he replied to her briefly, in a voice that had a strange hard ring — it had suddenly changed. He looked around at these people, who were again talking, and he said to himself: "They have played a trick on me. They shall pay for it."

He wanted the payment above all from the Countess and Annette. It was they whom he accused of this innocent double dealing. Suddenly the Count looked at the clock and exclaimed:

"*Eh! mes amis,* it is time we started or we shall be late." Then, turning to the painter he said:

"We are going to the opening of the Chambers, my wife is the only one who stays at home. Will you come with us?"

"No, thanks," he replied curtly. "Your Parliament doesn't tempt me."

Annette went up to him and said in her roguish manner:

"Oh, do come, *cher maître.* I am sure you will amuse us much more than the deputies."

"No! really. You will enjoy yourselves very well without me."

Seeing that he was not in an amiable mood, she wanted to be nice and tried to persuade him.

"Yes, come, *monsieur le peintre.* I assure you that I, for one, cannot get along without you."

Some words escaped him so quickly that he could not stop them or modify their accent. "Bah! You can get along without me like every one else," he said.

A little surprised at the tone, she exclaimed: "*Allons bon!* Just see, he has commenced not to '*tutoyer*' me."

His lips curled in one of those sarcastic smiles which

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show all the badness in one's soul. He made her a slight bow and said:

"I must get into that habit sooner or later."

"And why so?"

"Because you will marry and your husband, whoever he may be, will have the right to consider this 'tutoiement' from me out of place."

"There is time enough to think of that," the Countess hastened to say. "But I hope that Annette will not marry a man so susceptible as to take offense at this familiarity of an old friend."

"Hurry up! Hurry up, you good people. *En route* or we shall be late," cried the Count. And those who were going with him got up and went off with him, after the usual handshakes and kisses that the Duchess, the Countess and her daughter exchanged each time they met and each time they parted.

They were alone, she and he, standing behind the portières of the closed door.

"Sit down, *mon ami*," she said softly.

"No, thanks. I am going also," he said, almost violently.

She murmured in a supplicating tone:

"Oh! why, Olivier?"

"Because this is not my hour, so it appears, and I must ask your pardon for calling without informing you."

"Olivier, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, only I regret that I disturbed a party of pleasure that had been organized."

She grasped his hands.

"What is it you wish to say? They were just leaving when you came. As you see, they have gone to attend

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Letting her head fall on his knees, she sobbed.

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the opening of the session. I stayed. You have been, on the contrary, quite inspired in coming this afternoon, for I am alone."

He sneered.

"Inspired! Yes, very much inspired."

She took his wrists and held them tight as she looked in the depths of his eyes. Then she said in a low, thick voice:

"Confess to me, Olivier, that you love her."

He pulled his hand away, unable to master his impatience.

"You are mad with that idea!"

She grasped his arm; holding his sleeve with trembling fingers, she said beseechingly:

"Olivier, tell me! Please tell me! I want to know, although I am certain, but I want to *know*. I *must* know. Oh! you don't know what my life has become."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you want me to do? Is it my fault if you have lost your head?"

She held him and drew him on into the other room — the room at the end, where they could not be heard. She pulled him by the sleeve, clinging to him and gasping. When she had drawn him as far as the little round sofa she forced him to sit down and then sat down beside him.

"Olivier, *mon ami*, my only friend. I implore you, tell me that you love her. *I know it.* I feel it in everything that you do. I cannot doubt it, and it is killing me. But I must hear it from your own lips."

As he still argued she dropped on her knees at his feet. Her voice shook.

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"Oh, *mon ami,* my friend, my only friend. Is it true that you love my daughter? Only tell me."

He tried to raise her.

"No! no! Any. I swear to you I do not," he cried.

She got up suddenly and put her hand over his mouth and closed it.

"Do not lie to me, Olivier," she said. "I am suffering too much."

Then, letting her head fall on his knees, she sobbed.

He could only see the nape of her neck, with its coil of blonde hair, thickly streaked with silver, and he was seized with an immense pity, a great sadness came upon him as he looked down at her.

He took her heavy head of hair in his two hands and turned it quickly, almost violently raising her streaming eyes to him. He pressed his lips again and again on the blue eyes full of tears; each time he repeated softly, "Any, Any, dear Any."

She tried to smile and spoke in the hesitating, choked voice of a child when grief suffocates it.

"Oh, *mon ami,* only tell me that you love me just a little. Me."

He kissed her again and again.

"Yes, I do love you, Any dear."

She sat down beside him on the sofa and took his hands and stroked them tenderly. "We have loved each other for so long, it ought not to finish now," she said, wistfully.

He drew her closer to him.

"Why should it finish?" he asked.

"Because I am old and Annette is just like what I was when you first loved me."

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This time it was he who closed her sad mouth with his hand.

"Again I beg of you, do not speak of that any more. I swear to you that you have made a mistake."

"If only you can love me a little, just a little, me," she repeated.

"Yes, I do love you, Any," he said.

They sat for a long time, holding each other's hands, very moved and very sad. She was the first to break the silence.

"Ah! *mon ami,* the hours that remain for me to live will not be gay," she said.

"I will try to make them happy," he answered.

The shades of the cloudy sky which comes before twilight fell over the room, shrouding them little by little under the gray dim light of the autumn evening.

The clock struck.

"We have been here a long time," she said. "You must go, for they may return at any moment, and neither of us is calm."

He got up and strained her to him and kissed her as before on her half open mouth, then they walked back across the large room silently, with their arms linked together.

"*Adieu, mon ami,*" she said.

"*Adieu, mon amie,*" he answered.

And the heavy portière fell behind him. He walked down the staircase and into the street, turning towards the Madeleine. He walked on without knowing what he was doing. He was dazed like after a blow, his knees tottered, his heart was warm and palpitating, as though a burning compress had been placed on his chest.

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For two or three hours he continued his walk in a sort of moral besottedness and physical depression, which left him just enough strength to put one foot before the other. Then he went home to think and to go over the happenings of the past weeks.

It was true, then, he did love the child. He understood now all that he had felt when near her, since their first walk in the Parc Monceau, when he heard in her voice the appeal of another voice scarcely recognized — a voice which once had stirred his heart. Then there had been this slow, irresistible, recommencing of a love that had not burnt out, that had not yet grown cold, which he obstinately would not avow.

What should he do? Or, what could he do? When she was married he would shun her as much as possible, that was all. Meanwhile he would continue going to the house, so that no one should suspect, and he would hide his secret from them all.

He dined at home, a thing he had never done before; then he had the great stove in the studio lit, for the night was chilly. He ordered them to light the large candelabra, as though he feared the dark corners. Then he closed himself in his room. What a strange emotion gripped him! It was deep, physical and terribly sad. He felt it in his throat, his chest, in all his muscles, as much as he felt it in his weak soul. The walls of his room oppressed him. How many years of his life had been passed here, his life of an artist and his man's life. Each painted study hanging upon the walls recalled a triumph, each piece of furniture was a remembrance. But triumphs and remembrances were things that had passed. His life — how short and empty, and all for self it had been. He had made

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some pictures, then more pictures, always pictures, and loved one woman.

He recalled the nights of exaltation that he had passed after their *rendez-vous* in this same room. How he had walked up and down all night long with his whole being quivering with passion! The joy of a happy love, then the joy of worldly success, the unique intoxication of glory, had made him relish some hours that could never be forgotten — hours of intimate triumph.

He had loved a woman, and this woman had loved him. From her he had received the baptism which reveals to a man the mysterious world of emotion and tender sentiment. She had opened his heart almost by force, and now he could not close it to her. Another love had entered in spite of him by this same gap, another, or rather, the same, re-warmed by a new face — a sprig produced from the roots, which as it grows takes the strength.

Then it was true, he did love the child. He need no longer struggle, resist, or lie, he loved her with the hopelessness of knowing that he would not even have so much as a little pity from her — that she would always be ignorant of his atrocious torment, and another would marry her.

This thought that she would belong to another returned to him again and again; it was impossible for him to banish it. He was seized with an animal wish to howl and gnash his teeth in the manner of chained beasts, for he felt powerless, subdued, and chained like them. He became more and more unnerved; the more he thought of it; he walked with great strides across the vast studio, lit as brilliantly as though for a *fête*.

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At last, not able to tolerate longer this thought, he tried to calm himself by thinking of his old tenderness; he wanted to drown his mad love for the child by bringing up again his first great passion. He went to the closet, where he kept the copy that he had made for himself of the portrait of the Countess. He took it and placed it on his easel, then sat opposite with folded arms and looked at it. He tried to see her again as she used to be, to think of her as she used to sit for her portrait, just as when he first loved her. But it was always Annette's face that rose up on the canvas. The mother's face disappeared, fading gently away and leaving in its place this other face which was so strangely like hers. It was the *petite*, with her hair a little lighter, her smile a little more arch, her expression a little more mocking, and then he knew that he belonged body and soul to the child as he had never belonged to the mother — he belonged to her like a ship which sinks belongs to the sea.

He got up and turned the painting with the face to the wall so as not to see the apparition. Then he went to his room to fetch from the drawer of his writing-desk all the letters he had had from his mistress.

They lay there in their sleeping place as on a bed, one above the other, making a thick layer of little thin papers. He thrust his hand inside — into all this prose which spoke of them both — of their love — into this bath of their long *liaison*. He looked at this straight, narrow coffin of boards where the mass of envelopes lay, a heap of them, with his name on every one — his name only — always his name.

He thought of the love, of the tender attachment of

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two beings the one for the other, the story of two hearts that was told in this yellow pile of papers sealed with the crimson wax, and as he bent over them he inhaled an old breath, that melancholy odor of old letters that have been closed up.

He wanted to read them again, and rummaging to the bottom of the drawer he took out a handful of the earliest. As he read them, old memories dropped out, clear and precise, which moved his very soul. He remembered that many of them he had carried about in his pocket for weeks at a time, and he found through all the small writing which told him such soft, sweet things, the forgotten emotion of old. Then in one of the envelopes he came across a fine embroidered handkerchief. What was it? He thought for a few moments and then remembered. One day, when here in this room with him, she had sobbed because she was a little jealous, and then he had stolen her lace handkerchief soaked with her tears. Poor Any! Poor woman! How sad it was!

From the bottom of the drawer — from the depths of his past — all these memories rose up like a vapor; it was only the impalpable vapor of the dried up reality, but he suffered and cried over these letters as we cry over our dead because they are no more.

But all the stirring of this old love caused within him a young and new ardor, a sap of irresistible tenderness, and Annette's radiant face came back to haunt him.

He had loved the mother in a passionate flight of voluntary servitude; he commenced to love the child as a slave, like an old trembling slave to whom one rivets chains he will never be able to break. He felt it in the depths of his soul, and he was terrified. He tried to

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understand how and why she enslaved him like this. He knew her so little. She was scarcely a woman — her heart and her soul still slept the sleep of youth. And he was now almost at the end of his life. How then had this child been able to bind him — just with the tendrils of her blonde hair and a few smiles. Ah! the smiles and the hair of this little fair girl!

Does one know, will one *ever* know, why the face of a woman can suddenly exercise this great power on a man, the power of a poison? It seems that one drinks her in with the eyes, for she becomes one's thought and one's flesh. One gets drunk with it, maddened with it; one lives in this rapt image and wants to die in it. How one suffers sometimes from this fierce and incomprehensible power, this power of a form, of a face on the heart of a man.

Olivier Bertin began to walk the room again. The night was falling; the fire had died out. Through the clinks of the shutters the cold from outside came to him. After a while he went to bed, where until daybreak he thought and suffered.

He was up at an early hour without knowing why or what he was going to do. His excited nerves made him vacillate like a weathercock as it turns. He wanted mental distraction and physical occupation, and he remembered that this was the day when several members of his club met each week at the Bain Maure, where they had *déjeuner* after the massage. So he dressed quickly, hoping that the vapor rooms and the shower would calm him, and he went out.

As soon as he got outside a sharp chill gripped him; the crisp shivering cold of the first frost which destroys in a single night all that remains of summer. On the

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boulevard there was a thick shower of large yellow leaves, as they fell from the trees, with a dry crackling sound. One could see them falling as far as the eye could reach, from one end to the other of the wide avenue, between the façades of the houses, as if all the stalks with one movement had been separated from the branches by the cutting of a fine blade of ice. The roads and the sidewalks were already covered and for some hours had looked like a road in a forest at the beginning of winter. The dead yellow foliage crackled under the footsteps as the wind blew it together in little light heaps. It was one of those days of transition which come at the end of one season and the beginning of another, and which give us either a feeling of joy or of sadness — sadness for what has passed away, or enjoyment for the energy which is re-born.

It was with a feeling of satisfaction that Olivier entered the building of the Bain Maure. After his cold walk in the frosty air the thought of the heat that would soon penetrate his chilled flesh stirred in him a degree of pleasure.

He undressed slowly and rolled around his loins the light scarf that an attendant handed him and then disappeared through the padded doors that swung open to him. A warm, oppressive air, which seemed to come from a distant fire, made him breathe deeply as if he had been deprived of air as he crossed the moresque gallery lighted by two oriental lamps.

Then a woolly attendant, with shining torso and brawny muscles, wearing only a belt around his waist, rushed before him to lift up the portières at the other extremity, and Bertin went in the great round, silent room, which seemed almost as mysterious as a temple.

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The daylight streamed in from above, through the cupola and from the trefoil of colored glass in the immense circular hall, with its flagstone paving and walls covered with decorated faience in the Arabian style.

Men of all ages, almost naked, slowly walked about with grave, sedate steps, without speaking; others were seated on marble benches, their arms folded across their chests; others talked in low voices. The hot air made one gasp from the entry. There was something of the antique and mysterious in this stifling and decorated hall, where the human flesh was warmed and the body massaged by colored and Moorish masseurs.

The first face that the painter recognized was that of the Comte de Landa, who was walking round the *salle* like a Roman wrestler, proud of his enormous chest, and his great arms crossed over it. He was an *habitué* of the vapor rooms and felt, when on the scene, like an applauded actor, and he judged as an expert the discussed muscularity of all the strong men of Paris.

"*Bonjour,* Bertin," he called out.

They shook hands, then Landa said:

"*Hein!* good time for the sudation."

"Yes, splendid."

"Have you seen Rocdiane? He is over there. I had to go and pull him out of bed to get him here. Oh, just look at that anatomy! My!"

A little man passed them, shambling along on two knock-kneed legs. His chest was narrow and his arms painfully scraggy and the two old models of health and strength smiled disdainfully as he went by.

Rocdiane, who had just noticed Bertin, came towards them. They all three sat down on a long slab of marble and began to talk as though they were in a drawing-

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room. The *garçons* moved about carrying trays of drinks. One could hear the flagellation that the masseurs were giving to the naked flesh and the sudden splash of the shower. An incessant rippling of water coming from all corners of the great amphitheater fell with the sound of a light rain.

Every minute a newcomer nodded to the two friends or came up and shook hands with them. There was the big Duc d'Harisson, the little Prince Epilati, Baron Flach and many others.

"*Tiens!* there's Farandal," cried Rocdiane suddenly.

The Marquis came into the *salle,* his hands on his hips, walking with the ease of a man who is exceptionally well proportioned and fears no comments.

"Ah, that youth is a young gladiator," murmured Landa, admiringly.

Rocdiane turned to Bertin.

"Is it true that he is going to marry your friends' — the Guilleroys'— daughter?"

"I believe so," said the painter.

But this question, in this place, with the Marquis standing before him showing his splendid physique, sent an awful shock of hopelessness and revolt to Olivier's heart. The horrors of it all — this boy with the perfect form was to be *her* husband. Maddening thoughts rushed upon him with such force that for some seconds he struggled with the animal wish to spring upon the Marquis and grapple with him.

He got up.

"I am tired," he said to his friends. "I am going at once to have massage."

An Arab passed.

"*Ahmed, es-tu libre?*" he said to the man.

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"*Oui, Monsieur Bertin.*"

And he passed out with hurried footsteps so as to avoid shaking hands with Farandal, who came up slowly in making the tour of the Hammam.

He stayed scarcely a quarter of an hour in the large reposing room. The room was delightfully cool and peaceful, the circle of alcoves with their beds was round a garden of African plants, with fountains playing in the center.

Bertin was afraid that the Marquis might join him and that he would have to take his outstretched hand and treat him as a friend, when all the time he felt he would like to kill him.

He was soon back again on the boulevards covered with their dead leaves. They had finished falling, the last ones had dropped through a heavy gust of wind. Their red and yellow carpet moved and blew away in bits — here and there — flying from one sidewalk to the other, as the high wind got stronger. Suddenly a sort of hissing, moaning noise stole over the roof-tops, the cry of the tempest as it passes, and at the same time a violent wind which seemed to come from beyond the Madeleine blew over the boulevards.

All the leaves that had fallen seemed to have been waiting for it. At its approach they raked together in little heaps, and as it came upon them they blew whirling and rising in spirals up to the coping of the houses. The strong wind chased them like a flock — a maddened flock flying away; on they went wildly towards the outskirts of Paris — towards the free, beautiful blue sky of the country. When the big clouds of leaves and dust had disappeared beyond the high ground of the *quartier*

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Malesherbes the roads and the pavements were bare, miraculously cleaned and swept.

Bertin walked on, wondering what he should do. "What's to be done next?" he asked himself wearily, and then he turned towards his home, at a loss to know how to kill time.

A *kiosque* of newspapers attracted his eye; he bought seven or eight, hoping that he might find something to read for an hour or two.

"I shall have luncheon here," he said to his man as he went up to his studio. All thought of rest was out of the question; since he had seen Farandal he felt like an enraged beast. He sat down and scanned the newspapers, but could find nothing to hold his attention; the facts that he read stayed in his eyes without getting as far as his thoughts. In the middle of an article that he did not try to understand the word Guilleroy caught his eye and made him tremble. It was only about the opening of Parliament, where the Count had spoken a few words.

His attention, now a little more awake, was arrested by the name of the celebrated tenor Montrosé, who was going to give a single night performance at the Opéra, towards the end of December. It was as the newspapers explained a magnificent musical solemnity. The tenor Montrosé, who had been away from Paris for ten years, had returned, after making a tour in America and throughout Europe; his success in all the cities was without precedent. He would be accompanied by the renowned Swedish singer, Helsson. She also had not been heard in Paris for five years. Olivier at once felt he would like to give Annette the pleasure of hearing

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this performance. Then he remembered that their mourning would be an obstacle in the way, and he thought out the means so that it might be arranged all the same. Only one presented itself — if he could manage to get a stage box they would scarcely be seen, and then if the Countess still objected, Annette could be chaperoned by the Duchess. In that case he would have to offer the box to the Duchess; then he would have to invite her nephew. Bah! He hesitated and thought it over for a long time.

There was no doubt the marriage was quite decided and probably the date already fixed. He could imagine how his friend would hasten to bring it about; he knew that in the shortest time possible she would give her daughter to Farandal. He could do nothing. He could neither stop, modify, nor retard this awful thing. So, as he was obliged to submit to it, would it not be better to overcome his passion and hide his suffering and appear contented and never be carried off again by his jealous feelings? Yes, it was decided. He would invite the Marquis and in that way quell the suspicions that the Countess had, and he would keep on a friendly footing in the future home of the young couple.

As soon as he had lunched he went to the Opera House to make sure that he would be able to get one of the boxes that were hidden behind the curtains. It was reserved for him; then he hurried to the Guilleroys. The Countess appeared almost immediately; she was still much affected by their reconciliation of the night before.

"How good it is of you to come again to-day," she said.

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"I have brought you something," he stammered.

"What is it?"

"A stage box at the opera for a one night performance of Helsson and Montrosé."

"Oh, *mon ami,* I cannot. What a pity. I am so sorry, but you know my mourning."

"You have been in black for almost four months now," he said.

"Oh! it would be impossible for us to go."

"And Annette; think! an occasion like this may never come again."

"Who would take her?"

"Her father and the Duchess, whom I am going to invite. I shall also offer a place to the Marquis."

She looked straight into his eyes and a foolish wish to put her arms round his neck and kiss him came to her. But she only repeated, scarcely believing her ears:

"The Marquis!"

"Yes, the Marquis. Why not?"

And at once she consented to this arrangement.

"Have you fixed the date of their marriage?" he asked carelessly.

"*Mon Dieu!* Yes, practically. We all want to hurry it now as much as possible. It was already decided before mother's death, you remember?"

"Yes, perfectly. So when is it?"

"The early part of January. You will pardon me, *mon ami,* for not having mentioned it to you sooner."

At this moment Annette came into the room. He caught his breath between his teeth and his heart beat violently. Then all the tenderness that he felt for her suddenly became embittered; it was that passionate ani-

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mosity that love becomes when it is lashed by jealousy.

"I have brought you something," he said to her.

"Then we are most decidedly at 'vous,'" she said, as again he did not "tutoyer" her.

"Listen, my child," he said, adopting a parental air. "I know all about the important event that is to take place shortly, and then, I assure you, I shall have to be more formal with you, so it is better to begin too soon than too late."

She shrugged her shoulders, not at all pleased, while the Countess remained silent, with her eyes and thoughts seemingly far away.

"What is it you have brought me?" Annette asked.

He told her of the production at the Opera and that he had seats for them all.

She was delighted and sprang on his neck like a child, kissing him quickly on both cheeks.

For a moment his strength seemed to go from him; as he felt the two light kisses on his face coming from her little mouth with its sweet fresh breath he knew that he would never be cured of his love.

The Countess shivered.

"Your father is waiting for you, Annette," she said.

"Yes, mama, I am going."

She ran off, throwing him a kiss as she went.

As soon as she had gone Olivier said abruptly:

"Are they going to travel?"

"Yes, for two or three months."

And he murmured in spite of himself:

"So much the better."

"We will take up our old life again," said the Countess.

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"Yes, I hope so," he stammered.

"In the meantime do not neglect me again, Olivier."

"No, *mon amie.*"

The outburst of feeling that he had shown the day before when seeing her cry and the idea that he had had in inviting the Marquis to his box at the Opera had given a little hope to the Countess.

But it was short lived.

A week had not passed before she saw again with a torturing and jealous attention that he was passing through moments of the deepest anguish.

It was impossible for her to ignore it. Was she not herself going through all this grief that she felt he was suffering, and the constant presence of Annette made her see every moment of the day that all her efforts were useless. Everything seemed to crush her down at the same time — her years, her mourning, her sorrow. Her lively coquetry, so skillful and ingenious, which had made her triumph for him during all these years, was paralyzed by the sombre black garments which seemed to increase her pallor and the alteration of her features as much as it brought out the brilliant adolescence of her child.

The time seemed already far off, and yet it was such a little while ago, when she chose with pride a similarity in their dresses, which was so becoming to her. Now she had a mad desire to tear off the sombre black garments that made her look so much older and plainer.

If she could again have at her command all the resources of *chic* elegance, she could choose and wear beautiful silky materials in the softest shades that would harmonize with her complexion and give to her fading

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charms a studied power just as attractive as her daughter's inert grace. Without a doubt she would still have been able to look the more attractive.

She knew so well the effect of beautiful gowns. She knew what delicate evening dresses and soft sensual morning négligés could achieve; the charming boudoir gowns that can be worn for luncheon with one's most intimate friends and which envelope a woman in a sort of *saveur* of her awakening, the material and warm impression of her bed and the perfumed atmosphere she has left. But how could she tempt one in a sepulchral garment, a sort of convict's uniform that she was to wear for a year? For one year she was to be imprisoned in this awful black! *Quelle horreur!* For one year she would feel herself getting older, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, under this sheath of black.

She would be depressed and inactive for a whole year! What would she be like at the end of the term if her poor sick flesh continued to alter so, on account of all the suffering she was going through?

This idea never left her; it spoiled everything she might have enjoyed and made a burden of the things that should have been a joy, not leaving her one pleasure intact, or a contentment, or a gayety.

Without ceasing she rebelled and trembled with the exasperating wish to shake off this weight of misery which was crushing her, for without this harassing thought she would have still been so happy, lively and well.

She felt that her soul was perennial and fresh, her heart always young, that her passion was only beginning to live, that she had an insatiable appetite for

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happiness and love — more eager than in her youth was this devouring wish to love.

And here were all the good things — all the sweet, delightful, poetic things which make our lives so beautiful and dear to us drawn away from her because she was getting old. It was finished! And yet all the time she had the feelings of a young girl and the passionate emotions of a young woman. Nothing had gotten old but her flesh — her miserable skin — this stuff over her bones, which was fading little by little — fading and wearing like a cloth that covers a piece of furniture. She seemed to be haunted by this decadence of her beauty; these morbid ideas fastened to her and became almost a physical torment, and by degrees she began to experience a sensation of the epidermis, a sensation of aging, just the same as she might feel the heat or the cold. In short, she seemed to feel a vague moving process on her face, the slow on-coming of the lines as they crossed her forehead, the sinking in of the tissues of the cheeks and the throat, and the multiplying of the innumerable little ravages which in time devour our skins.

Just like a person who is stricken with a devouring disease whom a constant prudence compels to scratch himself — the perception and the terror of this slow abominable work that was destroying her beauty, impelled her with a powerful and irresistible craving to verify it continually in the mirror. She would gaze at her face with fixed eyes, then she would touch it here and there with her finger, as if to be better assured of the ineffaceable wear and tear of the years. The *crave* to look in the mirror was growing steadily. At first it was an intermittent thought which reappeared

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each time that she passed a glass in her own home or elsewhere. Then it took another form; she began to stop on the pavement, pretending to look in the shops, but all the time she would be gazing into the looking glasses at the back, which the shopkeepers use to ornament their windows.

It became a mania — an incessant occupation. In her pocket she carried a tiny ivory box of rice powder about as big as a nut; the interior lid closed with a spring and held a hidden mirror, and often while walking along she would hold it open in her hand and then raise it to her eyes.

When she tried to read or write in the tapestried drawing-room her mind, which for a moment was upon her work, would leave it and come back to the thought that haunted her.

She struggled and tried hard to take an interest in other things. She fought with this desire which continually interrupted her work. But it was in vain. The prick of this desire tormented her and soon her hand would leave the book or the pen and stretch out by an irresistible movement towards the hand-mirror in old silver which lay on her desk.

In the chased oval frame her face looked out at her — it was like a face that had been — like an old portrait — a pastel that was once fresh and now faded by the sun. Then, when she had looked at it for a long time, she would put the little object back with a weary movement and go on with her work, but she would not read two pages or write twenty lines before the craving would come to look at herself — invincible and torturing — and she would stretch out her hand again to take the mirror. She handled it now as

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if it was a familiar and annoying bauble that the hand could not leave, using it at all moments, even when receiving her friends. She hated it as though it were a being, but she kept it with her always.

One day, exasperated by this struggle between herself and the cruel piece of glass, she threw it in a frenzy up against the wall and smashed it to atoms. A few days later her husband brought it to her repaired. He had had a new glass put into the beautiful chased frame, a glass that was finer than the old one, and wonderfully clear.

She had to take it and thank him and she resigned herself to keeping it. Each morning and each evening she closed herself in her room and, although against her will, she made a minute and patient examination of the odious and ceaseless havoc.

When in bed she could not sleep. She would light a candle and remain with eyes wide open, thinking that insomnia and grief were irremediably hastening the work of Time which was passing onward so rapidly. In the silence of the night she listened to the ticking of the clock, which seemed to whisper with its monotonous tic-tac, "Time passes," "time passes," "time passes." Her heart shivered in anguish and moaned in despair. Until now she had felt, but in the same manner that every one feels, the changes that the years bring. Like us all, she found that each springtime or each summer she had altered a little. "I have changed since last year," she would remark lightly. But as she remained still beautiful, a slight alteration of her beauty did not worry her. Now, to-day, instead of verifying this slow march of the seasons, she saw and studied the formidable flight of the days. She now

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had a full revelation of this slipping away of the hours, of this imperceptible march of Time, which is maddening when we think of the infinite filing off of the little hurried seconds which are gnawing at the bodies and the lives of us all.

After the long, miserable night, when her maid had thrown back the curtains and made the morning fire blaze in the chimney, she was able to fall into a more tranquil somnolence; fatigued and drowsy, neither asleep nor awake, she would lie in a torpor of thought, raising up again the instinctive and prayerful hope that she would still live until her last days in the heart and the smiles of the man she loved.

Each morning now as soon as she left her bed she felt dominated by a powerful desire to pray to God, to get a little solace and comfort from Him.

She knelt before the large Christ in carved oak that Olivier had given her for a present — a rare piece of work that he had discovered. With closed lips — with the silent voice of the soul with which one speaks to one's self — she sent an appealing supplication to the Divine Martyr. Desperate, by the need of being heard and helped, naïve in her distress like all the faithful at prayer, she did not doubt that He listened to her, that He was attentive to her request and perhaps touched by her trouble. She did not ask Him to do for her what He had not done for others, to leave with her all her life the charm, the freshness and grace. She asked Him only for a little rest — a respite. She knew she had to get old the same as she knew she had to die. But why so quickly? Some women remained beautiful so long, would he let her be one of those? How good it would be! He who had suffered so much Himself,

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if He would let her have only for two or three years more the solace of the charm that she needed to be able to please!

She did not say this in words, but she moaned it to Him in the confused plaint of her heart.

Then, rising from her knees, she sat before her dressing table and with intense application of mind, as ardent as that she had had for her prayer, she handled the powders, pastes and pencils, the puffs and the brushes that made daily her frail beauty — her patched up, painted beauty.

CHAPTER VI

ON the boulevards one heard two names in every one's mouth — Emma Helsson and Montrosé. The nearer one got to the Opéra the more one heard them repeated. Besides, large posters were stuck on the Morris columns showing the celebrated names to all who went by. A crowd of people was standing before the great building that one calls the *Académie Nationale de Musique,* which loomed out brilliantly against the dark sky. Invisible focuses of electric light lit up like a magnificent decoration the stately white façade and the marble colonnade of its gallery.

On the square the Republican Guards on horseback directed the general traffic and the innumerable carriages which were arriving from all quarters of Paris.

Behind the lowered windows of the carriages one could see fair faces and exquisite gowns. The *coupés* and landaus were drawn up in line in the reserved arcades and the *mondaines*, and other precious creatures

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divinely decked out in elaborate cloaks trimmed with furs, feathers and priceless lace stepped out and walked up the steps into the marble hall. Up the world-renowned staircase it was like an ascension of fairies, an unbroken line of women dressed like queens, with diamonds flashing from their ears, throats and corsages and their long embroidered trains trailing behind them on the stairs.

The house filled quickly; no one wanted to lose a note of the celebrated singers. Throughout the vast amphitheater, under the dazzling lights falling from the crystal chandeliers, a surge of people were taking their seats amid a confused murmur of voices.

From the stage box, which was already occupied by the Duchess, Annette, the Count, the Marquis, Bertin and M. de Musadieu, one could only see behind the scenes, where groups of men were talking, others running to and fro giving orders; there were machinists in working blouses, gentlemen in evening suits and actors in stage costume. But behind the immense lowered curtain one could hear the deep murmur of the crowd and feel the presence of a multitude of moving and excited beings.

They were going to play Faust.

Musadieu elated some incidents on the first representation of this opera which had been held at the Lyric Theater. He told them how, at the beginning of the piece, they almost had a breakdown and then scored a magnificent triumph; about the actors and their style of rendering each piece. Annette, who had half turned towards him, listened with that eager and girlish curiosity that she seemed to bring into everything. Now and again she would give the man beside her, who

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was to be her husband within a few days, a look full of tenderness.

She loved him now like a young heart can love, that is to say, she loved in him all her future hopes. The intoxication of the first gaieties of life and the fervent wish to be happy in her marriage made her tremble with gladness and expectation.

And Olivier, who saw all, and who knew all, who had gone down into all the degrees of secret love powerless and jealous, down to the depths of human suffering, where the heart seems to crackle like flesh on hot coals, remained standing in the rear of the box. He looked at them both with the look of a criminal who is going to be executed.

The performance was going to commence. The three knocks were given, then a little sharp tapping of the bow on the conductor's desk, then all movements, coughs and voices stopped suddenly. After a short and profound silence the first notes of the introduction started, filling the house with the invisible and irresistible mystery of the music, which pours out into the body, maddening the nerves and the soul with a poetic and material excitement, mingling the limpid air that one seems to breathe with it, with the deep wave of glorious notes that one listens to.

Olivier, sitting in the rear of the box, was painfully affected; it seemed as if the wounds of his heart had been touched by these chords.

As the curtain went up he pulled himself together and looked out at the scene, representing the laboratory of the alchemist, Doctor Faust, who was sitting in a chair meditating. He had already seen this opera twenty times and knew it almost by heart, so his atten-

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tion left it at once and began to wander round the house. He had discovered a little angle back of the framework of the box, where he could see quite a portion of the audience. He had already recognized many acquaintances in the orchestra stalls, the men in white cravats sitting in a line side by side, it was like an exhibition of familiar faces — club men, artists, journalists, all the categories of those who never miss going where everybody goes. In the boxes on the balcony he saw several women he knew. The Comtesse de Lochrist, looking adorable, was in a box opposite the stage, while a little farther along he recognized a newly married *élégante,* the Marquise d'Ebelin. The men were already turning their opera glasses to look at her. "A brilliant beginning," thought Bertin. Every one was listening with great attention and evident sympathy to the tenor, Montrosé, who was lamenting on life.

"What humbug," thought Olivier. "Here is Faust, the mysterious and sublime Faust, who sings about the horrible disgust and the nothingness of it all, and this crowd is asking with anxiety if Montrosé's voice has not changed."

Then he listened like the others and behind the commonplace words the actor was singing, across the music which awakens in the depths of the soul some profound perceptions, he had a sort of revelation of the manner in which Goethe dreamed of the heart of Faust.

A long time ago he had read the poem, which he thought very beautiful, but he had never been very much affected by it, and now suddenly he felt the unfathomable depth, for it seemed to him that this evening he himself had become a Faust. Leaning forward

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a little over the ridge of the box, Annette was listening with all attention.

Some murmurs of satisfaction began to pass through the house, for Montrosé's voice was in better condition and richer than it had been ten years ago.

Bertin sat with closed eyes. For the last month everything that he saw and felt and everything that came into his life, he immediately made a sort of accessory to his love. All that he saw that was beautiful and rare — all that he could imagine that was charming, he at once mentally offered it to his little friend, and he had not an idea that could not in some way recall and coincide with his love. Now from the bottom of his heart he echoed the lamentations of Faust and the desire for death surged up in him, the desire that he also should finish with his griefs, with all the misery of his love that was without hope. He looked at Annette's delicate profile and then at the Marquis de Farandal, who was sitting behind her, and also gazing at her. He felt old, finished, lost! Ah! nothing to wait for, nothing to hope for, to hardly have the right to desire love. *He was old!* He was out of the running, at the retreat of life, like an old officer whose career is terminated. What intolerable torture!

The applause burst out. Montrosé had triumphed already and Méphistophèles-Labarrière arose from the ground.

Olivier, who had never heard him in this rôle, turned his attention to the stage again. His remembrance of Aubin, who was so dramatic with his bass voice, and the captivating Faure, with his baritone, diverted his thoughts for some moments. But suddenly a line that

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Montrosé sang with irresistible rendering moved him strangely. Faust said to Satan:

Je veux un trésor qui les contient tous,
Je veux la jennesse.

And the tenor appeared in silk doublet with sword hanging at the side, a toque of plumes on his head, a distinguished, young and handsome man, with the affected air of a singer.

A murmur ran through the house. He had a splendid physique and naturally pleased the women, but Olivier was disappointed, for the acute evocation of the dramatic poem by Goethe vanished in this transformation. From now on the play seemed to him some pretty scenes, full of nice music, some talented actors with good voices. This handsome young man in a doublet, with a stiff ruffled collar, who showed his thighs, displeased him. It was not the real thing, it was not the irresistible and sinister Chevalier Faust — he who was going to seduce Marguerite. He sat back in his seat and the phrase that he had just heard came back to him:

Je veux un trésor qui les contient tous,
Je veux la jeunesse.[1]

He murmured it between his teeth, sang it sorrowfully in the depths of his soul, and with eyes always looking at the creamy nape of Annette's neck, which showed up as she leaned over the square bay of the box, he felt in himself all the bitterness of his passion that could never be realized.

Montrosé was finishing the first act with such perfect rendering that the enthusiasm of the multitude burst

[1] I desire a treasure that contains them all.
I desire youth.

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forth. For several minutes the deafening applause, the stamping of feet, the clapping of hands, the shouts, the bravos, roared through the vast playhouse like a storm. In the boxes one could see the women beating their gloved hands together, while their escorts, standing behind, cheered and shouted their bravos.

The curtain fell and rose up twice without the enthusiasm abating. Then when it went down for the third time, separating the public from the stage and the interior boxes, the Duchess and Annette still continued to applaud for a few moments, and were specially thanked by a ceremonious bow that the tenor made to them.

"Oh, he looked at us!" cried Annette.

"He is splendid — simply superb," exclaimed the Duchess.

And Bertin, who had come forward and was leaning over, looked with a mingled sentiment of irritation and disdain at the cheered actor, who was disappearing between two doors, waddling a little, with his leg stiff, the sword dangling at the side, his hands on his hips in the studied pose of the hero of the play.

They commenced to talk of him. His success had made as much noise as his voice. He had visited all the capitals, in the midst of the ecstasy of women, who knowing in advance that he was irresistible had quick little flutterings of the heart when he came upon the stage, but he did not seem to occupy himself about these sentimental ravings, it was said, and was quite contented with his musical triumphs. But Musadieu knew, and he told them in a low voice, so that Annette should not hear the life of this handsome singer, and the duchess who had been fairly carried away by his singing, un-

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derstood and approved of all the follies that he had given rise to in women, because he was so wonderfully fascinating, distinguished, and elegant, such an exceptional musician!

"How could anyone resist a voice like that?" concluded the Duchess laughing. "Impossible."

Bertin felt angry and bitter. He really could not understand how women could be fascinated by a strolling actor, by one who continually represented types of human beings that never existed, by an illusive personification of men created by an idle fancy, by a nocturnal painted figure, who would play any rôle at so much a night.

"You are jealous, *mon cher,*" said the Duchess. "You others, you men of the world, and artists, all of you are simply jealous of actors, because they have more success than you."

She turned towards Annette.

"*Voyons, petite,* you who are beginning life and look upon things in a sane fashion, tell me, what do you think of this tenor?"

Annette replied in a decided tone.

"I think he is very nice, indeed I do."

The three knocks were given for the second act, and the curtain went up on the Kermesse. The passage of Helsson was superb. She also seemed to have a richer voice than formerly, and sang with a more complete confidence. She had now become the great, the exquisite cantatrice, whose renown equalled that of M. de Bismarck and M. de Lesseps.

When Faust sprang towards her and said in that captivating voice that phrase so full of charm:

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Ne permettrez-vous pas, ma belle demoiselle,
Qu'on vous offre le bras, pour faire le chemin.[1]

and the fair, pretty, and bewitching Marguerite replied:

Non, Monsieur, je ne suis demoiselle ni belle
Et je n' ai pas besoin qu' on me donne la main,[2]

the entire house was stirred with a keen emotion of pleasure.

When the curtain fell the applause was tremendous. Annette clapped such a long time that Bertin felt like seizing her small hands in his to stop her. He did not speak to anyone during the short interval. His eyes and thoughts were following the odious singer who was able to work Annette to such a pitch of excitement — he could see him behind the scenes and his eye followed him to his *loge* and watched him as he dabbed another layer of paint on his cheeks.

Then the curtain went up on the Garden scene. Suddenly it seemed as though a sort of love fever was running through the audience, for never had the wonderful music, which now seemed to be nothing but a wave of kisses, had two such excellent interpreters. It was no longer two celebrated singers — Montrosé and Helsson, — it was two beings of an ideal world, scarcely two beings, but two voices, the immortal voice of the man who loves, and the immortal voice of the woman who submits, and together they breathed all the poetry of human love.

[1] Will you not permit me, fair maiden,
To give you my arm on the way?

[2] No, sir, I am neither fair nor a lady of high degree,
And I have no need of being accompanied.

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When Faust sang:

Laisse-moi, laisse-moi contempler ton visage,[1]

there was such an accent of adoration, of transport, and of supplication in the notes that he sent forth, that for a moment the desire to love and be loved rose up in all hearts.

Olivier remembered how he himself had murmured the words in the park at Roncières, under the château windows. Until now he had always thought them a little commonplace, but now as he repeated them softly, it was like the last cry of passion, a last prayer, the last hope and the last favor that he could wait for in this life.

Then he listened to nothing more, he heard nothing more. A jealous rage tore him as he saw Annette lift her handkerchief to her eyes.

She was crying! It was the heart awakening — animated, excited, her little heart which until now had known nothing of love. There, sitting quite near to him, without her thinking of him, she had the revelation of the way in which love can overthrow a human being, and this revelation, this initiation, had come to her through a miserable strolling singer.

Ah! he had nothing now against the Marquis de Farandal, the fool who sat beside her seeing nothing, knowing nothing, understanding nothing. But how he abhorred the man in doublet and silk tights who had awakened a young girl's soul. He felt like throwing himself on the child, as one would throw himself on a person that a runaway horse was going to crush. He

[1] Let me, oh! let me gaze upon your face.

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wanted to seize her in his arms to carry her away, crying: "Come away! Come away! I implore you." He did not want the knowledge to come to her like this.

How she listened! Her eyes sparkled, her breath came quickly. How excited she was! and how he suffered. He had suffered before, but less cruelly. He recalled all his sufferings, for each jealous grief rushes back to us when the wounds are re-opened. He remembered it was first at Roncières, as they were walking back from the cemetery, when he felt for the first time she was escaping him, that he had no influence over her — over this independent child who was like a young animal. But down there when she annoyed him, leaving him to go and pick her flowers, he felt a brutal wish to stop her from running away and force her body to stay near him. But to-day, it was the soul itself, which had just awakened and was flying away.

Ah! this gnawing pain which he was beginning to know now so well, he had felt it so often with all the little wounds; they seem so small, but have the power to make incessant pain in hearts that love.

He recalled all the painful impressions of small jealousies which had fallen on him — falling with a little sharp knock every day. Each time that she noticed, admired, liked or wanted something he was jealous of it; he was jealous of all, in a perpetual and imperceptible manner. Of everything that took up her time, her look, her attention, her astonishment, her affection, because all these things took her a little more away from him. He had been jealous of everything she did without him, of all the things in her life that happened that he did not know, of her amusements, her readings, everything that gave her pleasure; he had been

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jealous of a wounded soldier, a hero in Africa whom Paris talked of and whom she thought of for eight days; of the author of a popular novel, of an unknown poet whom she had never seen but whose verses Musadieu had recited and she had become enraptured; in short, he was jealous of everyone whom she heard praised, even in an ordinary manner, because when one loves a woman one cannot tolerate without anguish the thought that she is thinking of any one else, with even a degree of interest. One feels the dominating wish to be the only one in her eyes. One does not want her to see, or know, or appreciate any other. As soon as she seems to have the wish to turn, and consider, or want to know some one else, one thrusts oneself upon her, and if one cannot bring her back or absorb her entirely, then one suffers from the depths of the soul.

Olivier had this jealous feeling now. This singer had awakened Annette's soul. This painted actor! He seemed to be diffusing and gathering in love from the entire house. Bertin felt an ill will to everyone who made this tenor's triumph, the women in the boxes who were so elated and the men — the simpletons — they were all making a god out of this fop. An artist! They called him an artist, a great artist! He had had some success, this coxcomb, this man who interpreted foreign thoughts in a way that no composer would ever have recognized. Ah! this was the fairness and the intelligence of society people, these ignorant and pretentious amateurs for whom the masters of the human arts work until their death. He looked at them applauding, shouting, crying, and the old hostility which had always fermented in the depths of this haughty and proud heart of a parvenu rose up in a furious rage

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against these fools — who were all-powerful, solely by the right of their birth and money.

Until the end of the performance he was silent, a prey to his thoughts, then when the storm of the final enthusiasm had died away, he got up and offered his arm to the Duchess, and the Marquis offered his to Annette. They went down the wide staircase in the midst of a stream of men and women, in a sort of slow and magnificent cascade of white gleaming shoulders, exquisite gowns and evening dress. Then the Duchess, Annette, her father, and the Marquis said good-night, and got into the landau, and Olivier Bertin remained standing alone with Musadieu on the Place de l'Opéra.

He suddenly felt a great affection for Musadieu, or rather the natural attraction that one feels for a comrade one meets in a distant city, for now he felt lost in the midst of this unknown, indifferent crowd while with Musadieu he could still speak of Annette.

He took hold of his arm.

"Come along," he said. "You are not going home at once. Such a lovely night. Let us have a stroll."

"I'm willing," said Musadieu.

They walked towards the Madeleine, in the midst of the nightly crowd, in the short and great excitement of midnight, which seems to jolt the boulevards after the people pour out of the theaters.

Musadieu had a thousand things running through his head that he wanted to talk about, all the latest tittle-tattle talk which Bertin called his "Daily Menu." So he gave full rein to his eloquence and rushed through the subjects that interested him most.

The painter let him go on without listening, holding his arm all the while, waiting for the moment when he

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could make him speak about Annette, and he walked on seeing nothing, and hearing nothing that was going on around him — imprisoned in his love.

He was weak and worn out by these feelings of jealousy which had bruised him, as though he had had a great fall; he was depressed by the certitude that now he had nothing more to live for. He would go on suffering more and more with nothing to look forward to. He would have lonely days one after the other, and he would see her afar off — living, happy, and loved; loving also without a doubt. A lover! Yes! She would have a lover perhaps, like her mother had had one.

He experienced so many phases of suffering so different and complicated, such an afflux of unhappiness, such hopeless misery, he felt so completely lost, that it seemed impossible to him that any one could ever have suffered as he did. And then he thought of the puerility of the poets who imagined the useless toil of Sisyphus, the material thirst of Tantalus, the consumed heart of Prometheus. Oh! if they had foreseen, if they had thought of the distracted love of an old man for a young girl, how could they have explained the abominable and secret effort of a being that one can no longer love, the tortures of the passion that is barren, and more terrible than a vulture's beak, a little fair girl cutting to pieces an old man's heart. Musadieu was still talking when Bertin interrupted him murmuring:

"She was lovely to-night, don't you think so, Musadieu?"

"Who?"

"Annette."

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"Yes! exquisite."

The painter added to stop him from taking up the thread of his ideas again:

"I think she is prettier than her mother was, don't you?"

Musadieu agreed in an absent manner repeating several times "Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes . . ." without his mind grasping the subject. Olivier tried to get him to talk of her, so he artfully held out as a bait to him one of his favorite preoccupations.

"She will have one of the first drawing-rooms in Paris after her marriage," he said. That was sufficient. The frequenter of the smart *salons* was caught as well as the Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts. He doubly appreciated the position that the Marquise de Farandal would hold in French society. His eloquence now broke forth in this direction. Bertin listened to him. He could see Annette in her beautiful *salons* surrounded with distinguished men and elegant women. This vision made the miserable jealous feeling come again.

They walked up the Boulevard Malesherbes. As they passed before the Guilleroy's house the painter looked up. He could see the lights in the windows through the opening of the curtains.

Probably the Duchess and her nephew had been invited to take tea with them; he clenched his hand, but he still held Musadieu tightly by the arm and listened to him as he spoke of the young future Marquise. As he listened to Musadieu's ordinary voice, he seemed to see her image hovering in the night around them.

When they reached the Avenue de Villiers and stood before the painter's door, Bertin said:

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"You will come in, won't you?"

"No, thank you, it is late. I am going home to bed."

"*Voyons!* Come up just for a half an hour, to have a little chat."

"No, really, Bertin, it is too late."

The thought of being alone, after all the agony he had gone through and was still going through, filled him with horror. He had some one with him now, and he meant to keep him for a time.

"Come up," he said. "I want you to choose a painting that I have long intended offering you."

Musadieu, who knew that artists were not always in a generous mood and that their memory of promises was short, jumped at the occasion.

In his quality of inspector of the Beaux-Arts he possessed a splendid collection of pictures.

"Go up, I'll follow," he said at once.

They went into the studio and the valet, waking up as they came in, soon set before them some refreshments, and they talked on paintings for some little time.

Bertin then showed some pictures to Musadieu and told him to take which he liked best. The inspector hesitated for a long time; he was afraid to make a choice, because he was worried about the lamp-light, which deceived him a little on the shades.

Finally he chose a group of little girls jumping with a skipping rope on the pavement. And almost at once he wanted to hurry off and carry his picture with him.

"I will have it sent to you," said the artist. "Sit down. Don't be in such a hurry."

"No! no!" said Musadieu. "I won't trouble you.

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I must go now. I will take it with me to-night, so that I can admire it before going to bed."

Nothing could keep him and Olivier Bertin found himself once more alone in his home, this prison of old memories and present sufferings.

When the man came into his room the next morning, bringing the tea and the newspapers, he found his master sitting up in his bed, so deathly pale that he was afraid.

"You are sick, sir," he said quickly.

"It is nothing," answered Bertin. "A slight headache."

"Is there anything I can get for you, sir?"

"No! What is the weather like?"

"It is raining, sir."

"Ah! No, there is nothing more I want."

The man placed the tea service and the newspapers on the little table and left the room.

Olivier took the *Figaro* and opened it. The article that headed the page was entitled "*Modern Painters.*"

It was a dithyrambic eulogy of four or five young artists, who, endowed with real qualities of colorists and exaggerating them for effect, had the pretension to be revolutionists of genius.

Like all the senior painters, Bertin disliked these newcomers; he was annoyed by their ostracism and disputed their doctrines. He began to read the article with the feeling of anger that leaps up so quickly in a heart that is already unnerved; then, in glancing down the column, he saw his own name and these few words at the end of the article struck him like a blow of the fist on the chest:

"*The old fashioned art of Olivier Bertin.*" He

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had always been very sensitive to criticism as well as to praise, but in his heart of hearts, although notwithstanding his legitimate vanity, he would feel more hurt at being censured than he would feel pleasure at being praised, as the result of the anxiety he felt for himself which his irresolution had always nourished. Although, in the days that had passed, when he had been at the height of his success, the flattery that had been showered upon him had been so great that it had made him ignore any slight criticism. But to-day, before the incessant pushing forward of the new artists by the new admirers, the congratulations had become rarer and the disparagement more frequent. He felt that he was enrolled in a regiment of old painters, whom the younger members of the profession no longer treated as masters, and as he was as intelligent as he was sensitive, he had now begun to feel the slightest insinuation as much as he would a direct attack.

Never before had any blow to his artist's pride made him suffer as keenly as he did at this moment. For a moment or two he gasped for breath, then he read the article over again slowly, so as to understand it in all its shades. He and some fellow artists were simply thrown down and trampled on with an outrageous ease.

He got up from his bed and dressed, muttering the newspaper paragraph reference to himself over and over again:

"*The old fashioned art of Olivier Bertin.*" Never had such sadness, such discouragement, such a feeling of the end of all things, of the end of his physical being and his mental being been able to throw him into a distress of the soul so utterly hopeless. He sat for two or three hours motion-

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less in his great chair before the fireplace, his limbs stretched out before the fire, not seeming to have the strength to move or do anything whatever. Then the desire to be comforted came to him, the wish to clasp devoted hands, to see faithful eyes, to be consoled and caressed by a few kind friendly words. So he went as usual to the Countess.

When he was shown in, Annette was alone in the *salon*. She had her back turned to him and was writing an address quickly on an envelope. On the table at the side of her was the *Figaro* open. Bertin saw the newspaper at the same moment that he saw the young girl, and remained speechless, not daring to advance.

Oh! if she had read it! She turned round. She was in a great hurry and seemed very busy; her mind was entirely taken up with feminine worries.

"Oh! Good morning, *Monsieur le peintre*," she said. "You will excuse me if I run off at once, won't you? The dressmaker is waiting for me. Of course you understand how important the dressmaker is when one is going to be married. Mama is discussing and arranging about the gowns with my artiste at this moment, but I will lend her to you. If I need her I shall ask you to give her back to me in a few minutes."

She left the room and ran quickly across the hall to show him what a great hurry she was in.

This abrupt departure, without a word of affection, not even a kind look for him, who loved her so much . . . so much, completely unnerved him. His eye again fell on the *Figaro*.

"Yes, she has read it," he said. "They poke fun at me. They deny me. She does not believe in me now.

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I am no one to her." He took two steps towards the newspaper, with the movement that one would take towards a man to strike him. Then he said to himself: "Nevertheless, perhaps she has not read it. She is so busy to-day. But they will speak of it before her, at dinner this evening, most likely, and then she will want to read it."

By a spontaneous movement, without thinking, he stretched out his hand for the paper, folded it up and slipped it in his pocket with the quick, stealthy manner of a thief.

The Countess came into the room. As soon as she saw Olivier's livid and convulsed face she knew that he had reached the limit of suffering.

She ran to him and placing her hands on his shoulders looked straight into his eyes.

"*Oh! mon ami*, how unhappy you are," she said.

He did not deny it this time and his throat shook with spasms as he said in a broken voice:

"Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes . . ."

She felt that he was going to break down entirely and drew him gently into the farthest corner of the room, towards a sofa hidden by a little screen of old tapestry. They sat there behind the fine embroidered shelter, shrouded also by the gray shadows of a rainy day.

She was heart-broken at seeing his misery. Her only thought was pity for him.

"My poor Olivier, how you are suffering," she said.

He leaned his white head on his friend's shoulder and pressed her hand.

"More than you can imagine, dear," he said.

She murmured so sadly:

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"Oh! I know it. I have felt it. I saw it born, and I have watched it grow."

He replied as though she had accused him:

"It is not my fault, Any."

"I know it. I do not reproach you."

And then, softly bending her head a little towards him, she pressed her lips on his eyes, and found a bitter tear. She trembled as though she had tasted a drop of despair and she said again and again:

"Ah! poor friend . . . poor friend . . . poor Olivier."

Then after a moment of silence she said:

"It is the fault of our hearts, which have not grown old. I feel mine so young and full of life."

He tried to speak, but could not; his body was shaken with dry sobs.

She felt against her the choking suffocation in his chest. Then her own love for him, which for so long had raged within her, rose up again. With a heart-rending voice, as when one states a terrible calamity, she said:

"My God! How you must love her!"

He did not deny it.

"Ah! Yes, I love her . . . I love her," he murmured.

She remained thinking for a moment, then she said:

"You never loved me like this, did you?"

He did not lie to her; he was going through one of those hours when one can speak only the truth.

"No, I was too young then," he answered.

"Too young! How?" she asked in surprise.

"Because life was too smooth then. It is at the age we are now only, that one can love so desperately."

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"That which you feel when you are near her, is it anything like what you felt when you were near me?" she asked.

"Yes, and no! Although it is almost the same thing. I loved you almost as much as one could love a woman. Annette, I love as I loved you, because she is part of you, but this love has now become something that is powerful, destructive, stronger than death. I am to this love as a house is to a fire which is burning it."

She felt her pity wither in a hot wave of jealousy. After a moment she said in a soothing voice:

"There, *mon pauvre ami.* In a few days she will be married and will go abroad. If you do not see her you will get cured without a doubt."

He shook his head.

"No, Any, I am lost . . . lost."

"No! no! You will be three months without seeing her. That will be sufficient. Three months was long enough for you to love her more than me, whom you had known for twelve years."

"Any, you will not leave me," he implored.

"What can I do, *mon ami?*"

"Don't leave me alone, Any."

"I will go and see you as much as you like."

"No! Keep me here as much as possible."

"You will be near her."

"And near to you."

"Olivier, you must not see her again before she is married."

"Oh! Any."

"Well, at least, very little."

"Can I stay here this evening?"

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"No! Not in the state you are in. You must go and get some distraction — go to the club or to the theater — anywhere, it does not matter where, but you must not stay here."

"Oh! let me, Any," he pleaded.

"No, Olivier, it is impossible, and, besides, I have people coming whose presence would agitate you still more."

"The Duchess? and . . . he . . ."

"Yes."

"But I spent last evening with them."

"That was all very well, but you are too agitated to-day."

"I promise you I will be calm."

"No, it is impossible."

"Then I will go."

"Why in such a hurry?"

"I want to walk."

"That is right. Walk a lot. It will do you good. Walk until night. Kill yourself with fatigue and then go to bed."

He got up to go.

"Adieu, Any."

"Adieu, dear friend. I will call and see you to-morrow morning. Shall I commit an imprudence like I used to? Shall I pretend to have lunch here at mid-day and then go and take it with you at a quarter past one?"

"Yes, I should like that. How good you are."

"It is because I love you."

"I love you also."

"Oh; do not speak of that."

"Adieu, Any."

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"Good-bye, dear friend. To-morrow, then."

"Adieu."

He kissed her hands — slow, fervent kisses — then her temples, then the corners of her lips. His eyes were dry now, his manner resolute.

As he was going out of the room he turned back and clasped her to him. He held her in his arms and pressed his lips on her forehead again and again; he seemed to drink — to inhale from her all the love that she had for him.

Then he went out quickly without looking back.

When she was alone she dropped onto the sofa and sobbed as though her heart would break. She would have stayed there until night if Annette had not come to look for her.

"Mother! mother! where are you? I want you," Annette called.

So as to have time to dry her red eyes she called back:

"I am coming in a moment, dear. I have a little note I want to write. I will come to you very soon."

Until the evening she had to occupy herself with the important question of the trousseau.

The Duchess and her nephew dined with the Guilleroys *en famille*. They all sat down to table and were just beginning to talk of the performance at the opera the night before when the butler came into the room carrying three large bouquets.

Madame de Mortemain looked up in surprise.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What is all this?"

"Oh! are they not beautiful?" Annette cried. "Whoever could have sent them, mother?"

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"Olivier Bertin, I suppose," her mother replied.

Since he had left the house she had thought of him incessantly. He had seemed so gloomy and tragical; she saw so clearly his unhappiness without end, she felt so keenly the rebound of this sadness, she loved him so much, so tenderly, so completely, that her heart was weighed down under a mournful presentiment.

In the three bouquets they found three of the painter's cards. He had written in pencil on each, the name of the Countess, the Duchess and Annette.

"Your friend Bertin, is he ill?" asked the Duchess. "I thought he looked fearfully sick yesterday."

"Yes, I have felt rather anxious about him," said Madame de Guilleroy. "But he does not complain."

"Oh, he is like us all," said her husband. "He is getting old. He has aged terribly lately. I always think that bachelors fail suddenly. They go down quicker than others. He certainly has changed greatly."

The Countess sighed.

"Indeed, yes," she said.

Farandal stopped whispering to Annette.

"There was a very disagreeable article about him in the *Figaro* this morning," he said.

The Countess flared up. Any attack, criticism, the slightest unfavorable allusion to her friend made her indignant.

"Oh!" she said hotly, "men who are as talented as Bertin can be above taking notice of such coarseness. Bah!"

"*Tiens!* A disagreeable article about Olivier," said the Count in astonishment. "I did not read it. What page was it on?"

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The Marquis told him.

"On the first page at the top, under the heading of "Modern Painters."

The deputy was no longer astonished that he had not read it.

"Ah! Yes, perfectly. I did not read it because it was about painting," he said.

There was a general smile, every one knew that outside of politics and agricultural affairs M. de Guilleroy took no interest in anything else. Then the conversation ran on other subjects until they went in the *salon* to take coffee. The Countess scarcely spoke a word all the evening. She was full of anxious thoughts of Olivier. Where was he? Where had he dined? Where was he dragging his incurable misery at this moment? She now felt a piercing regret for letting him go. Why had she not kept him with her and looked after him? She could imagine him roaming along the streets so sad — wandering along, alone, shrinking under his grief. Until it was time for the Duchess and her nephew to go she remained quietly sitting in her chair thinking — vague and superstitious fears seemed to hover around her. When she went to her room she lay in her bed with eyes wide open, looking out into the dark shadows of night and thinking of him.

Hours seemed to have passed when she thought she heard the bell of the apartment ringing. She started and sat up in bed to listen. For the second time a ringing vibrated in the silent house. She jumped out of bed and pressed the electric button that connected with the servants' quarters, then with a lighted candle in her hand she ran into the hall.

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Across the door she asked:

"Who is there?"

A strange voice replied:

"I have a letter."

"A letter from whom?"

"From a doctor," said the voice.

"What doctor?"

"I don't know. It is about an accident."

She hesitated no longer. She drew the bolts and opened the door and stood face to face with a cabman in a great-coat and oilskin hat. He had a letter in his hand, which he handed to her. It was in a strange handwriting. She read:

> "Très urgent —
> Monsieur le Comte de Guilleroy —"

"Come in, my good man," she said, "and sit down here and wait for me."

As she stood outside her husband's bedroom door her heart beat so violently that she could not call him, so she struck the wood with the metal candlestick she held in her hand. The Count was sound asleep and heard nothing.

Then she became impatient and unnerved; she kicked at the door with her foot, and she heard a sleepy voice call out:

"Who is there? What time is it?"

"It is I," she called back. "I have an urgent letter for you that a cabman has just brought. There has been an accident."

"Wait a minute," he called. "I'll get up. I'm coming."

In a few seconds he came out in his dressing-gown.

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At the same moment two servants, who had been awakened by the bell, came hurrying forward. They were scared and amazed to see a strange man sitting in the dining-room.

The Count took the letter and turned it over in his fingers.

"What can it be? I cannot imagine," he said.

"Read it, then, and see," she said impatiently.

He tore open the envelope and unfolded the sheet of paper, then gave a startled cry and looked at his wife with frightened eyes.

"My God! What is it? Tell me, quick," she said.

He could scarcely speak, he was so overcome with emotion.

"Oh! something dreadful . . . dreadful . . . Bertin has been run over," he said in a shaky voice.

"Dead!" she cried.

"No! no! Read it yourself."

She snatched the letter he held out to her from his hand and read:

"Sir, a terrible misfortune has happened. Our friend, the eminent artist, M. Olivier Bertin, was knocked down by a car, which passed over his body. I cannot as yet state anything definite as to the results of this accident. They may not be serious, but should complications set in it might prove fatal. M. Bertin begs that you and Madame la Comtesse de Guilleroy will come to him at once. I trust, sir, that you and Madame la Comtesse will immediately grant this request of our mutual friend, who may have ceased to live before daybreak. DR. DE RIVIL."

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The Countess looked at her husband with wide-fixed eyes, full of terror. Then suddenly she received like an electric shock that rush of courage which can make a timid woman at the most terrible moment the most courageous being.

Turning to the servant she said:

"Quick. I want to dress."

"What will Madame put on?" her maid asked.

"It doesn't matter. Get anything."

"You be ready in five minutes, Jacques," she said to her husband. Then she turned to go to her room, her heart trembling with fear. As she passed the dining-room she noticed the cabman, who was still waiting.

"You have your cab?" she said to him.

"Yes, Madame."

"That is well. We will take it."

She ran into her bedroom. She got into her clothes desperately with quick movements; she hooked, tied and buttoned them any way; then, standing before her mirror, she screwed her hair into a knot, but this time as she stood before her glass she did not notice the pale, drawn face and haggard eyes. When she had thrown a cloak over her shoulders she rushed to her husband's room. He was not yet dressed.

She forced him to go with her.

"Never mind, Jacques, don't stop for anything. He may die before we get there," she said.

The Count was scared and followed her, stumbling along and groping his way down the dark staircase, trying to make out the steps so as not to fall.

The drive was short and silent. The Countess looked out of the cab windows and saw the flickering gas jets veiled with a gray mist and rain. The pave-

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ments were glimmering with the rain; the boulevard was deserted, the night sinister.

When they arrived at the painter's home they found the door wide open; the concierge's *loge* was lit up and empty.

On the top of the stairs Dr. Rivil came to meet them. He was a short, plump little man, well-groomed and with very polished manners.

He made a deep bow to the Countess and held out his hand to the Count.

"Well, doctor," said Madame de Guilleroy, her breath coming in gasps as though the walk up the stairs had exhausted her.

"*Eh bien!* Madame, I hope that it will not be as serious as I thought at first."

"He will not die?" she cried.

"No! At least, I do not think so."

"You are not sure?"

"No. I only say that I hope it is merely a simple abdominal contusion without internal injuries."

"What do you call internal injuries?"

"Lacerations."

"How do you know that he has not any?"

"I suppose so."

"If he has?"

"Oh, then it is very serious."

"He would die?"

"Yes."

"Very quickly?"

"Yes, very quickly. In a few minutes or even a few seconds. But rest assured, Madame, I am convinced that he will be up and about in fifteen days."

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She had listened to him with great attention so as to understand all.

"What lacerations could he have?" she asked.

"His liver might be torn, for instance."

"Is that very dangerous?"

"Yes . . . but I should be surprised if complications set in now. Let us go to him. It will do him good to see you, for he has been very impatient since the messenger started."

What she first saw on going into the room, was a pallid face on a white pillow; a few candles and the light from the fire lit it up, showing the profile and accentuating the shades, and in this livid face the Countess saw two eyes which looked at her as she went in.

All her courage, strength and resolution fell at once, for she knew that she was looking at the hollow and distorted face of a dying man. He whom she had seen a short while ago had become this thing — this phantom.

"My God!" she murmured between her teeth, as she walked towards the bed trembling with awe.

He tried to smile to reassure her, and the grimace of this attempt was frightful.

When she was quite near to the bed she placed her two hands on his, which was stretched outside the bed coverings near his body.

"Oh! my poor friend," she said.

"It is nothing," he replied in a very low voice, without turning his head. She looked at him, now aghast at the change. He was so deathly white that it seemed that he had not a drop of blood under the skin. His hollow cheeks seemed to be drawn in from the interior

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of the face and his eyes were sunken in the sockets as though a thread was drawing them from the inside. He saw the look of terror in his friend's face and sighed.

"I'm in a fine state," he said, trying to smile again.

"How did it happen?" she asked.

He made a great effort to be able to talk, and at times his entire face quivered with nervous spasms.

"I did not look where I was going . . . I was thinking of something else . . . my thoughts were far away . . . Oh; yes, and the car came along, and I fell and it passed over my stomach."

In listening to him she could see the accident, and she said, starting with horror:

"Did you bleed?"

"No, I am only a little bruised, a little crushed," he said.

"Where did it happen?"

"I am not quite sure," he said in a low voice. "It was a long way from here."

The doctor rolled a *fanteuil* to the bedside and the Countess dropped into it.

The Count stood at the foot of the bed, repeating between his teeth:

"Oh! my poor friend, my poor friend, this is terrible."

He felt a great sorrow, for he had grown to like Olivier very much.

"But where did it happen?" the Countess asked again.

"I do not even know," said the doctor. "Or, rather, I do not understand where it could have been.

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They gazed at each other.

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It was somewhere near the Gobelins — almost outside of Paris, at least, so the cabman who brought him here told me. He said he had taken him from a druggist in that quarter; he had been carried in there at nine o'clock in the evening."

Then, bending over Olivier, she said:

"Is it true that the accident happened near the Gobelins?"

Bertin closed his eyes as though trying to remember.

"I don't know," he said.

"But where were you going?"

"I don't remember. I was walking straight ahead."

A groan that she could not stop came from her pale lips. Then, after a choking that left her a few seconds without breath, she pulled out her handkerchief from her pocket and putting it to her eyes began to sob bitterly.

She knew. She understood now. Something intolerable, overwhelming, fell upon her heart. The remorse of not having kept Olivier with her; why had she not let him stay when he pleaded so. She had driven him out, thrown him into the street, where he had fallen, dazed with grief, under the car.

He said to her in the dull, lifeless voice that he now had:

"Do not cry. It hurts me."

By a marvelous effort of will she stopped sobbing and drew her handkerchief from her eyes and fixed them on his eyes, without a quiver moving her face, but the tears continued to fall slowly. They gazed at each other, both of them motionless, their hands touching on the counterpane of the bed. They looked at one an-

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other oblivious that there were others present in the room, and their look brought from one heart to the other an emotion that was more than human.

There came between them a quick, silent and rising up of all their memories, of all their crushed tenderness, the love they had felt together, all that they had united and mingled in their lives, in the temptation which gave them to each other.

They looked at one another and the need to hear the thousand intimate sad things they still had to say was silently spoken by them both.

She felt that she must at any price get the two men who stood behind them out of the room. She must find some means — a ruse, an inspiration — she who had always been so quick with resources. And she began to think, keeping her eyes still fixed on Olivier.

Her husband and the doctor talked in low voices; they were discussing the care he would need.

Turning round, she said to the doctor:

"Have you brought a nurse?"

"No. I prefer to send a surgeon from the hospital; he is the better one for a case like this."

"Send both. One cannot have too much care. Can you get them to-night? For I suppose you are not staying here until the morning."

"No, I was just going. I have been here four hours. There is nothing more I can do."

"Then you will send the nurse and the surgeon at once?"

"It is difficult to do so in the middle of the night, Madame."

"It must be done."

"They will perhaps promise, but will they come?"

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"My husband will go with you and will bring them back by persuasion or force."

"You cannot stay here alone, Madame."

"I cannot . . ." she said with a sort of cry of defiance — an indignant protest against any who disputed her will. "And why not? My husband must go and get some one immediately." And then she explained the necessities of the situation with an authority of manner which admitted no reply. Before an hour a nurse and a surgeon must be there so as to be ready in case of emergency. To get them, of course, it was necessary to go and rouse them from their beds and bring them along. Her husband could do that alone. While he was gone she would stay beside the sick man — she, whose right and duty it was. She was simply fulfilling her rôle of a friend — of a woman. Besides, she wished it so, and that was all there was to be said in the matter. Her reasoning was sensible. They agreed to it and decided to follow her advice for thy realized that nothing would make her swerve from her determination. She stood up. She was anxious to hurry the two men off so as to be alone with Olivier.

She listened attentively to the doctor's last instructions. She tried to fix her mind and understand all he said so as to make no mistakes during his absence. The valet came into the room and stood beside her, listening also, and his wife, the cook, stood in the doorway. She had helped the doctor when he first dressed the wounds and she indicated by repeatedly nodding her head that she also had equally understood.

When the Countess had said over and over again, like a lesson, all the instruments, she urged the two men to go, saying to her husband:

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"Go now, because I want you to come back quickly. Above all, come back quickly."

"I will take you in my coupé," Dr. Rivil said to the Count. "You will get there quicker. You will be back here in less than an hour."

Before leaving he again carefully examined the wounded man, so as to be assured that his condition was satisfactory.

Guilleroy still hesitated. He felt very anxious about Bertin.

"Do you think we are wise to leave him, doctor?" he asked.

"Oh, it is all right. There is no serious danger, I assure you. He only wants rest and quiet. Madame de Guilleroy must not let him speak and must speak to him as little as possible."

The Countess started.

"He must not talk?" she said.

"Oh, no, Madame. Take your chair and sit beside him. He will not feel alone if some one sits near to him, but no fatigue. He must not get tired from talking or even from thinking. I shall be here by nine o'clock to-morrow morning." He bowed low to her and went out of the room, followed by the Count, who turned round at the door to say to his wife:

"Don't get anxious, my dear. Before an hour I shall be back and then you can go home."

When they had gone she listened to the door closing, then to the carriage rolling away in the distance. The valet and the cook were still in the room, waiting for orders. She dismissed them. "You can go now," she said to them. "I will ring if I need anything."

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They left the room and she was alone with him.

She went back to the bed and placing her two hands on the pillow, each side of the beloved face, she bent over to look at him. Then she asked, so near to his face that it seemed that she was breathing the words onto his skin:

"You threw yourself underneath the car?"

He replied, still trying to smile:

"No, the car threw itself over me."

"That is not true; it was you."

"No, it was the car."

After a few moments of silence — those moments when souls seem to entwine themselves in looks she murmured:

"Oh, my dear Olivier, to think that I made you go. Why did I not keep you?"

"It would have happened to me all the same sooner or later," he replied with conviction.

They looked into each other's eyes, trying to read their most secret thoughts.

"I don't think I shall get better," he said. "I am suffering so much."

"You are in pain?" she cried.

"Oh, yes."

Leaning a little over him, she brushed his forehead, then his eyes, then his cheeks with slow kisses, light and delicate — as soft and gentle as the little attentions we give to the sick. The tip of her lips scarcely touched him; it was like the little fluttering breath that a child gives when it embraces, and it lasted a long time — a very long time.

He let the shower of soft and light caresses fall on

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him. They seemed to soothe him and take part of his suffering away, for little by little his face became more peaceful.

"Any," he said presently.

She stopped her caresses to listen.

"What, *mon ami?*"

"You must make me a promise."

"I will promise anything that you ask, dear."

"If I am not dead before daybreak swear to me that you will bring Annette here only once . . . just once, Any. I cannot die without seeing her again. Think that . . . to-morrow . . . at this hour . . . perhaps I shall . . . perhaps my eyes will be closed forever . . . and I shall never see either of you again . . . I . . . neither you . . . nor Annette."

She stopped him. Her heart was bleeding.

"Oh! stop . . . stop . . . Yes, I promise I will bring her."

"You swear it."

"I swear it, my friend; but stop, do not say more. You are hurting me so . . . Stop."

He had a sharp, convulsive spasm of all his features. When it had passed he said:

"If we have only a few more minutes to stay together, do not let us lose them. Let us say our adieux. I have loved you so much."

She sighed.

"And I . . . How I have loved you — always."

Again he said:

"I have had nothing but happiness from you, Any.

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These last days only have been hard. It was not your fault . . . Ah! my poor Any . . . . life is so sad sometimes . . . and it is so — so difficult to die."

"Stop, Olivier . . . I implore you . . ."

He continued without heeding her:

"I should have been happy always if you had not had your daughter."

"Oh! Olivier, stop . . . have pity on me."

He seemed to be thinking more than talking; he did not seem to hear her; he went on in a low, dreamy voice:

"Ah; he who created this existence and made men was very blind or very wicked."

"Olivier, I implore . . . if you ever loved me, you will stop . . . do not speak like this . . . you will break my heart."

She gazed at him as she bent over him, her face so pallid that she herself looked like a dying person, and he was silent.

She sat back in her chair near to the bed and took his hand, which lay on the coverlet.

"Now, you must not speak any more," she said. "Do not move, and think of me as I think of you."

They kept silent looking at each other, joined by the burning contact of their flesh. Now and again she pressed the feverish hand that she held in hers and he answered this appeal by closing his fingers tightly over hers. Each of these little pressures told them something; they stirred in their memories the stagnant remembrances of their love. Each was a secret question, each a secret answer — sad questions, sad answers — these "do you remember it?" of an old love. In this

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meeting of anguish which would perhaps be the last their spirits brought up across the years all the history of their love.

There was no sound in the room but the crackling of the log fire. Suddenly he said, as though he was coming from a dream, with a start of terror:

"Your letters!"

"What? My letters?" she asked.

"I should have died without destroying them. Oh! Any."

"What does that matter to me?" she cried. "I don't care about them. They may find them and read them, nothing matters now."

"I do not wish it," he replied. "Get up, Any, and open the last drawer in my desk — the large one. They are all there, every one of them. You must take them and burn them."

She remained in her seat and shivered as though he had asked her to do a cowardly thing.

"Any, I beg you to do it," he said. "If you do not do it you will torment and madden me. It must be done. Think! They may fall into the hands of anyone, the lawyer . . . the servant . . . or even your husband. You must do it."

She rose slowly from her seat.

"No, it is too hard — too cruel, Olivier. It seems that you are making me burn our two hearts."

He begged her. His face changed under the agony he was going through.

Seeing him suffer, she went slowly towards the desk. She opened the drawer and saw it full to the top, a thick pile of letters, heaped one upon another, and she saw on the envelopes the two lines of the address that she had

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written so many times in the last twelve years. How well she knew them! these two lines — the name of a man, the name of a street. She knew them as well as she knew her own name — as well as one can know the few words which mean all the hope and the happiness in life. She looked at the little square pieces of paper which contained all that she had been able to tell him of her love — all that she could snatch from herself to give him on a little piece of paper with a little ink.

He tried to turn his head on the pillow to look at her.

"Burn them quickly, Any," he said.

Then she took two handfuls and held them for a moment in her hands. It seemed a hard and sorrowful task. There were so many different things contained in these letters — things that had passed, that had been so fragrant and sweet. It was the soul of her soul, the heart of her heart, the essence of her love that she held in her two hands. She recalled with what joy she had scribbled some of them, with what exaltation — the intoxication of living — of loving some one, and to be able to tell it.

"Burn them — burn every one, Any," Olivier said again.

With a quick movement of her two hands she threw them into the fire, the two handfuls scattered as they fell on the burning logs. Then she took more from the drawer and threw them on the top, — then still more. She stooped and rose again from the fire with the same quick movement, hurrying to finish as quickly as possible the cruel task.

When the fireplace was full and the drawer empty, she stood before the chimney, — waiting, looking at the

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flames, that had been almost extinguished by the heap of envelopes. She watched them creeping round the pile. First they attacked the borders, nibbling the corners, drawing back, obliterating, catching again, and getting larger. Soon there was a quick belt of clear fire around the white pyramid, which filled the room with a bright light, and this light lit up the woman standing by the fire, and the man lying on the bed, it was their love changed to ashes.

The Countess turned round and in the vivid light of the flames, she saw her friend's haggard face leaning over the edge of the bed.

"Are all there?" he asked.

"Yes, all," she answered.

Before going back to him she gave the fire a last look, and on the heap of half burnt papers which curled and twisted and then became black, she saw something red flowing. It looked like drops of blood. It seemed to come from the very heart of the letters, from each letter it flowed as though coming from a wound, and it glided slowly towards the flame leaving behind a dull purple trail. The Countess gazed at the crimson fluid, and her eyes widened with horror, her soul received the shock of a supernatural terror, and she recoiled as though she had seen the murder of some one. For a few minutes she stood spell-bound, her heart fluttering like a caged bird. Then suddenly she understood, she had only seen the crimson seal of her crest as it melted.

Then she turned to the wounded man and raising his head gently, put it back on the middle of the pillow; but he had moved too much and the pain had returned. He gasped for breath and his face began to twitch with intense suffering; he seemed not to know that she

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was there. He kept his eyes turned obstinately from her.

She waited for the spasms to pass, for him to look at her again, so that she could say some kind words to him. At last she said:

"Are you suffering much, *mon ami?*"

He did not reply.

She bent over him and placed a finger on his forehead to make him look at her. He opened his eyes — but they were wild eyes — eyes of delirium, which looked up at her.

She was terrified.

"You are in pain, Olivier. Speak to me, my friend. Shall I call? Try and say something to me, dear."

His lips moved.

"Bring her to me. You swore you would. You must bring her," he said.

Then he quivered under the sheets, his body twisted, his face was convulsed and grimacing.

"Olivier. . . . My God, . . . tell me, what is it. . . . Shall I call?"

He heard her this time, for he replied: "No! Any, it is nothing."

He seemed now to be exhausted, he suffered less, and suddenly fell into a sort of stupor. Hoping that he was going to sleep, the Countess sat beside the bed, and took his hand again and waited. He did not move, his chin had dropped on his chest. Short breaths came through his half open mouth seeming to scrape the throat as they passed. Only his fingers moved, every now and again they shook quickly. The Countess could feel the light spasmodic shakes to the very roots of her hair. She trembled so she wanted to cry out.

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It was no longer the little voluntary pressures which told, instead of the tired lips, all the sorrow of his heart; it was the unappeased spasms which were telling the torment of the body. Now she was afraid — a fearful terror came upon her, and a mad wish to fly, to ring, or call for someone, but she dared not move for fear he would suffer more.

Now and again as she sat there motionless she heard the distant noise of a carriage. She listened to hear if the rolling of the wheels would stop at the door.

Was it her husband coming back to deliver her, to snatch her away from this sinister vigil?

As she tried to draw her hand away from Olivier's, he tightened his fingers over hers and heaved a deep sigh. Then she resigned herself to wait, she would not disturb him, some one would come soon.

The fire died in the grate under the black ashes of the letters; two candles burnt down in their sockets and flickered out; the furniture creaked strangely.

In the house all was quiet, all seemed dead except the great Flemish clock on the staircase which regularly chimed the hour, the half hour, and the quarter hour, singing in the night the March of Time, modulating it on its various tones.

The Countess sat motionless, feeling a great terror creeping round her heart. Nightmares came upon her, terrifying thoughts troubled her mind, and it seemed to her that Olivier's fingers were getting cold in hers. Was it true? No! No! it was not so! It was only her imagination! But where did this feeling of strange and icy contact come from? She got up trembling with fear to look into his face.— He had relaxed, he was impassive, inanimate, indifferent to all misery, suddenly appeased by the Eternal Oblivion.

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THE OLIVE GROVE

I

WHEN the men of the harbor, the little harbor of Garando, in Provence, on the bay of Pisca, between Marseilles and Toulon, saw the boat of Father Vilbois coming back from a fishing trip, they went down on the beach to help him land.

The Father was alone and he rowed like a true sailor, with rare energy for his fifty-eight years. His sleeves were rolled up over his muscular arms and he had lifted the hem of his gown and was holding it between his knees. His hat lay on the bench beside him and he had donned a sort of white linen helmet. Thus arrayed, he appeared the truly strong priest of tropical countries, as much at home in the battle for life as in his priestly duties.

From time to time he would glance over his shoulder to determine his landing point; then he would turn to his oars again and apply them with regular, vigorous strokes, to show the poor sailors of the South once again how the Northern men handle their oars.

The boat ran ashore and darted over the sand as if it were going to climb the whole beach; then it stopped short and the five men who were watching the priest approached smilingly, for they liked their pastor.

"Eh ben!" exclaimed one of them, with the strong accent of Provence, "did you have good luck, monsieur le curé?"

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Father Vilbois drew in his oars, removed his helmet, put on his three-cornered hat, pulled his sleeves down, buttoned his gown to the throat, and having thus reassumed his priestly prestige, he proudly replied:

"Yes, yes, very good luck, three cat-fish, two sea-eels and several small fishes."

The five fishermen had gathered round the boat and, peering over the edge, examined the catch with trained eyes. They commented on the fat eels, the flat-headed cat-fish and the other purple and orange-colored denizens of the deep.

Said one of the men:

"I'll carry 'em home for you, monsieur le curé."

"Thanks, my good man."

After shaking hands all around, the priest set out toward his bungalow, followed by one of the fishermen. The other four remained behind to look after the boat.

He walked with great strides and an air of strength and dignity. As the vigorous exercise of rowing had warmed him, he removed his hat from time to time when he passed under the shade of the olive-trees, to let the cool evening breeze play on his square brow covered with thick, closely cropped white hair, the brow of an officer rather than the brow of a priest. The village was built on a hillock, in a large valley that descended like a plain to the sea.

It was an evening in July. The blazing sun, nearing the crest of the far-off hills, cast over the white road buried under a thick layer of dust, the long shadow of Father Vilbois, whose enormous three-cornered hat made a big black blotch on a neighboring field and seemed to climb the trunks of the olive-trees as he walked along.

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Under his feet rose a cloud of fine powder, that impalpable flour which, in the summertime, covers the roads of Provence; it flew around him and deposited a light coat of gray dust on the edge of his gown. Refreshed by the cooling breeze, Father Vilbois proceeded slowly on his way, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, like some powerful mountaineer making an ascension. His calm eyes rested on the distant village, *his* village, where he had dwelt twenty years and which he had chosen and obtained as a great favor. He hoped to die there. The church, *his* church, crowned the cone of houses that clustered about it with its two square brown towers, which, in this beautiful Southern valley, looked more like the defenses of a stronghold than the steeples of a sacred monument.

The abbé was happy, for had he not caught three cat-fish, two eels and several other fine specimens?

Again he would be able to triumph innocently over his parishioners, he, their priest, whom they respected especially because he was, in spite of his age, the most powerfully built man of the region. Those little triumphs were his greatest pleasure. He could shoot flowers off their stems and often practiced with the owner of the cigar store in the village, who was a former army provost, and he could swim better than any of the men of the coast.

Father Vilbois had once been the baron de Vilbois, a great society man, who had entered the priesthood when he was thirty-two years old, after an unfortunate love-affair.

The offspring of an old religious and royalistic Picardy family, which, for generations, had given its sons to the army, the magistrature and the Church, he had

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first thought of entering the priesthood on the advice of his mother. Then, obeying the pleadings of his father, he decided to come to Paris, study law and obtain some important office in the Palais de Justice.

But, while he was completing his law course, his father died of pneumonia, which he had contracted while on a hunting trip, and his mother, prostrated by the death of the head of the family, soon followed him to the grave. The young son came into a large fortune and, abandoning the idea of a career, took up the life of a mere man about town.

Good-looking, intelligent, although a trifle narrow-minded through his early home training and hereditary principles, which were as much a part of him as his powerful muscles, he soon became socially prominent and lived a life such as any rich, well-thought-of and somewhat rigid young man might live.

But it happened that, through a friend, he met a youthful actress, a pupil of the "Conservatoire," who had just made a most successful début at the "Odéon."

He fell in love with her, with all the violence and enthusiasm of a man brought up to believe in the absolute. He fell in love with her because he saw her through the glamour that poesy and fame cast around woman.

She was pretty and naturally perverse, although she had the look of an innocent child. He called it her angel look. She bewitched him so completely that she turned him into one of those raving maniacs, one of those ecstatic lunatics whom a woman's glance can burn on the pyre of Mortal Passions.

She became his mistress and he made her leave the stage. He loved her devotedly four years, with an ever-growing passion. In spite of his old name and

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family traditions, he would certainly have married her, had he not discovered, one day, that she deceived him with the friend who had brought them together.

The shock was rendered all the more terrible by the fact that she was "enceinte" and that he was awaiting the birth of the child to propose marriage.

When he held the proof of her faithlessness in his hands, he had found some compromising letters, he reproached her with her deceit and dastardly conduct.

But she, a true child of the streets, as impudent as she was immodest and as bold as those women of the masses who mount barricades just for the fun of it, braved and insulted him; and when he raised his hand to strike her down, she showed him her waist.

He stopped and paled at the sight. Here was a child of his! A child of his lived in this vile creature, this impure woman! Then he rushed at her to crush out her life and annihilate the double infamy. Feeling that she was doomed and frightened almost out of her wits by her lover's passionate anger, seeing that he was about to stamp out the life within her, she held out her hands to parry the blow and cried:

"Don't kill me, don't kill me! It isn't your child, it's his!"

He sprang back in utter bewilderment and stammered:

"What . . . what did you say?"

And the girl, crazed with fear at the glimpse she had had of death at his hands, repeated:

"It isn't your child, it's his."

Between clenched teeth he muttered:

"The child?"

"Yes."

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"You lie."

And again he made a threatening gesture. The kneeling girl backed away from him and stuttered:

"I tell you it's his. If it were yours, wouldn't I have had one long ago?"

Her statement struck him as supremely plausible. In one of those mental flashes in which every argument stands forth with great clearness and distinctness, he was convinced that he was not the father of the wretched child which this debased woman carried and the thought quieted him so that he gave up his design to destroy the polluted creature.

Then in a calmer voice he said:

"Get up and get out, I never want to lay eyes on you again."

Conquered, she obeyed his command and left the house.

He never saw her again.

Then he went away, too. He went South and stopped in a village on the shore of the Mediterranean. An inn overlooking the sea caught his fancy; he engaged a room and remained. He stayed there eighteen months, in despair and sorrow and complete isolation. He was pursued by the charm of the faithless woman and longed for her presence and caresses.

He wandered disconsolately through the villages and under the grayish olive-trees, nursing his sorrow.

But all his former ideas of religion, all the ardent faith of his boyhood came back to him little by little during this mournful period. Religion, which formerly had appeared to him as a refuge from a life he ignored, now seemed to him a haven against deceit and torment. He always had preserved his faith in prayer. And

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often, in the gloaming, he would enter the little church where a lamp burned over the altar to signify the Divine Presence.

He confided in God and told Him his unhappiness. He asked for help, pity, protection and consolation and his prayers every day grew more fervent.

His wounded heart, filled with love for a woman, remained open and palpitating and eager for tenderness; so little by little, his prayers and his solitary life, the habit of close communion with the Saviour who calls and consoles the wretched, awakened in him a mystical love of God which triumphed over the lusts of the flesh.

Then he took up his first plan and determined to offer up his broken life on the altar of Duty and Religion.

So he became a priest. Through his family connections he obtained a call to the village in Provence, where chance had flung him, and, having turned over a large portion of his fortune to charitable institutions, and retained only a small part of it to alleviate the poverty of his flock, he took refuge in a life of abnegation and devotion to his fellow-creatures.

He became a narrow-minded but kindly priest, a sort of religious guide with a soldier's temperament, who forced blind and erring humanity into the straight path and rescued it as best he could from the wilderness of life, where all instincts, tastes and desires are so many paths that lead to destruction. But a great deal of the former man clung to him. He never gave up his liking for violent exercise, noble sports, and he hated all women with the dread that a child feels before an unknown danger.

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II

The sailor who followed the priest felt a real Southern desire to be sociable. But he did not dare to begin a conversation, for all of the abbé's flock held the latter in great awe. Finally, however, he picked up courage.

"So," said he, "you like your bungalow, monsieur le curé?"

Father Vilbois' bungalow was one of those tiny houses that shelter the inhabitants of the cities and villages of Provence during the summer months. The Father rented this bungalow, which was built in an open field and was at a stone's throw from his parish-house, that was too small and close to the church.

But, even in summer, he did not live there regularly, but only spent a few days in it now and then, to breathe the pure country air and make short hunting trips.

"Yes, my friend," replied the priest, "I like it very well."

The bungalow showed through the trees as they approached. It was a pink structure which the boughs and leaves of the olive-trees almost hid from view, and it looked like a mushroom that had sprung up in the field over night.

They also caught sight of a tall woman moving to and fro before the door, setting a small table. She carried out one object at a time and placed it deliberately on the white cloth, first a plate, then a napkin and a piece of bread, and lastly, a glass. She wore the little bonnet affected by the women of Arles and which is nothing but a pointed cone of black silk or velvet, ornamented with a white rosette.

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When the Father was within earshot he shouted:

"Hey, Marguerite?"

She paused in her work and looked up. She recognized her master.

"Why, is it you, monsieur le curé?"

"Yes, I've had fine luck and I want you to broil me a cat-fish right away, with nothing but butter on it, do you hear?"

The servant, who had advanced to meet the men, examined the fishes with a trained eye.

"I already have cooked a chicken with rice," she said.

"Well, it can't be helped; a fish that is kept over never tastes as good as one that has just been caught. I will have a little feast. It doesn't occur very often and, besides, it's not such a great sin, after all."

The servant picked out a fish, and as she turned to go into the bungalow, she said:

"Ah! monsieur le curé, a man was here three times to see you."

Indifferently Father Vilbois inquired:

"A man! What sort of a man?"

"A man who didn't look like much."

"What! Was he a beggar?"

"Perhaps; I don't know. I think, though, he must have been a 'mafouatan.'"

Father Vilbois burst out laughing at the word, which, in the language of Provence, designates a tramp, a marauder, for he knew Marguerite's timidity and that she could never spend a day or a night in the bungalow without imagining that they would be murdered.

He handed a few sous to the sailor who had accompanied him and the man went away. Just as Father

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Vilbois, who had given up none of the former habits of a well-groomed man, said: "I'm going to wash my hands," Marguerite called to him from the kitchen, where she was engaged in scraping the silvery fish with a knife:

"There he is now."

The abbé looked toward the road and caught sight of an ill-clad man nearing the house with slow steps. He waited, smiling at the terror of his cook and thinking: "Really, I think she's right; he certainly looks like a 'mafouatan.'"

The stranger approached leisurely, with his hands thrust in his pockets and his eyes resting on the priest. He was young and wore a full, blonde beard and whisps of curly hair straggled from beneath his soft felt hat, which was so battered and old that its former color and shape were not recognizable.

He wore a long brown overcoat, a pair of frayed trousers, and sandals that lent to his walk something uncanny and suspicious.

When he was within a few feet of Father Vilbois he raised, with a theatrical gesture, the rag that protected his brow and showed a faded, pleasing face and a bald spot on the top of his head, a sign of precocious debauchery and fatigue, for he certainly was not more than twenty-five years old. The priest also removed his hat, feeling instinctively that this man was not an ordinary tramp, a laborer out of work or some convict hovering on the brink of jail and hardly knowing anything save the mysterious tongue spoken in penitentiaries.

"Bonjour, monsieur le curé," said the man.

The priest simply replied, "I salute you," for he did

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not care to address as "monsieur" this suspicious-looking individual. They looked at each other intently and Father Vilbois felt as troubled by the gaze of this vagabond as if he were confronting some unknown enemy; he felt overwhelmed by one of those strange sensations that sometimes creep unawares into one's very flesh and blood.

At last the tramp spoke:

"Well, don't you know me?" he said.

With the greatest surprise the priest replied:

"Why, no, not at all. I do not know you."

"Ah! you don't know me? Look at me again."

"I can look at you all I please, but I never saw you before."

"You've spoken a true word," retorted the man sarcastically, "but let me show you some one you know better."

He clapped his hat on his head and unbuttoned his overcoat. His bare chest showed beneath it. A red sash tied around his thin loins kept his trousers in place. He put his hand in his pocket and drew out an envelope, one of those nondescript envelopes covered with stains that tramps carry about their persons and into which they put the various legitimate or ill-gotten documents that secure their freedom from over-zealous gendarmes. He pulled out a photograph about the size of a letter, yellow, worn and faded by the continual contact of his flesh.

Then, holding it up beside his face, he asked:

"And that face, do you know it?"

Father Vilbois advanced a step to get a better view and then started back in bewilderment. It was his own likeness, that he had made for *her*, years and years ago.

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He made no reply, being at loss to understand the meaning of the scene. The tramp repeated:

"Do you recognize this picture?"

And the priest stammered:

"Why, yes."

"Who is it?"

"It is I."

"Is it really you?

"Yes."

"Well, now look at the picture and then at me."

Already the wretched man had seen the resemblance between the two beings, the one in the photograph and the laughing creature that held it close to his face, had discovered the startling likeness, yet he could not grasp the meaning of it and stammered:

"Well, what is it you want of me?"

In an ugly voice the tramp replied:

"First I want you to recognize me."

"Well, who are you?" demanded the abbé.

"Who am I? Ask anybody in the street, ask your cook, let's go and ask the mayor of the place, if you like, and show him this photograph: and I tell you he'll laugh. Ah! papa curé, you won't acknowledge that I'm your son, eh?"

Then the old man, lifting his hands high above his head in a biblical gesture, moaned:

"It cannot be true."

The young fellow came close to him.

"Ah! it cannot be true? Ah! Father, you must stop lying, do you hear?"

He assumed a threatening expression, clenched his fists and spoke with such violent conviction that the

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priest backed away and wondered which one of the two was mistaken.

However, he reiterated:

"I never had any children."

The other man retorted:

"And never a mistress, I suppose?"

The old man resolutely uttered one word, a proud avowal.

"Yes."

"And that mistress was not with child when you threw her out?"

Suddenly the old anger which had been choked back twenty-five years ago, which had been choked back, but not forgotten, burst through the wall of faith and resignation and abnegation that Father Vilbois had built around it and, beside himself with rage, the old man shouted:

"I threw her out because she had deceived me, because she was carrying another man's child. Had it not been for that, I would have killed her, monsieur, and killed you at the same time."

The young fellow hesitated, surprised at the sincerity of the outburst and then he said gently:

"Who told you that it was another man's child?"

"Why, she told me so herself, and braved me."

Then the tramp, without disputing the word of the older man, concluded in an indifferent voice:

"Oh! well, mother made a mistake in telling you this, that's all."

Mastering himself also, the abbé in turn inquired:

"And who told you that you were my son?"

"She did, on her death-bed, m'sieu le curé — And

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then, this! —" And he again held the little photograph up to the priest.

The old man took it from him and slowly, carefully, with a heart bursting with anguish, compared this unknown man with his old picture. Then he doubted no more; this stranger was really his son.

A terrible depression overwhelmed him, like the remorse of an old crime. He understood a little, guessed the rest and lived over the brutal scene of the separation. It was to save her life from her maddened lover, that the deceitful woman had lied. And the lie had won. And a son of his had been born into the world and had grown into this sordid tramp who smelled of vice like a he-goat smells of the barn.

He murmured:

"Will you take a little walk with me, so that we may come to an understanding?"

"Well, I guess so, that's why I came," replied the man.

They strolled side by side through the olive-grove. The sun had gone down. The coolness of Southern evenings spread a chilly mantle over the country. The abbé shivered and, raising his eyes with the habitual motion of the priest, he noticed everywhere about him the tiny gray leaves of the sacred tree that had sheltered the Greatest Sorrow and Only Weakness of the Saviour of man.

A prayer gushed from his heart, short and despairing, uttered by the inward voice that never passes the lips and with which believers implore Christ: "Oh! Lord, help your servant."

Then, turning to his son:

"So your mother is dead?" he said.

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A new sorrow rose within him as he uttered these words: "Your mother is dead," a strange sensation of distress, peculiar to the man who never forgets the ties of the flesh; it was like an echo of the past torture he had suffered. Only it was even worse, for now she was dead and nothing remained of the short and delicious bliss of the past but the deep wound in his heart.

The young fellow replied:

"Yes, monsieur le curé, my mother is dead."

"Has she been dead long?"

"Yes, she died three years ago."

A new doubt came over the priest.

"Then why did you not seek me sooner?" he asked.

The man hesitated.

"I couldn't. There were things that prevented me. But, excuse me for interrupting these reminiscences, I'll be as explicit as you wish later on; I want to tell you that I haven't eaten anything since yesterday morning."

A great wave of pity swept over the old man, and he stretched out both hands to the tramp.

"My poor child," said he.

The young fellow's slim, hot fingers closed over the great hands that the priest held out to him.

Then he replied in the sarcastic tone that hardly ever left him:

"Well, well, I'm beginning to think that we shall get along very well together."

The priest started toward the bungalow.

"We'll go in and have dinner," he said.

He suddenly thought with childish delight of the fine fish he had caught that afternoon and which, with the chicken and rice, would make a good meal for the wretched young fellow that day.

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The cook, anxious and surly, was waiting at the door.

"Marguerite," cried Father Vilbois, "take the table and carry it into the bungalow, quick, and set another place, quick, I say."

The servant stared at her master dubiously when she understood that he intended to sit down to a meal with the tramp. Seeing this, Father Vilbois removed the table himself and carried it into the only room of the bungalow.

A few minutes later he was sitting opposite the vagabond, before a tureen of cabbage soup that sent up a cloud of fragrant steam.

III

After the plates had been filled, the tramp fell to voraciously.

The priest had lost his appetite and only sipped the fragrant broth, leaving the bread in the bottom of the plate.

All at once he spoke:

"What is your name?"

The man laughed. He was glad to be able to satisfy the demands of his stomach.

"Father unknown," he said, "no other name than my mother's maiden name, which, of course, you recall. On the other hand, I have two Christian names that don't seem to fit me very well—'Philippe-Auguste.'"

The priest paled and in a strangled voice demanded:

"Why were you given those names?"

The tramp shrugged his shoulders.

"I should think you could guess. After mother left you, she tried to make your rival believe that he was my

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father, and he did believe it until I was about fifteen years old. Then, I began to look a great deal like you, and the old rascal disowned me. They had named me 'Philippe-Auguste,' and if I'd had the luck to look like no one or to have been the son of a third party, to-day I would be the Viscount Philippe-Auguste de Pravallon, legitimized son of Senator Count de Pravallon. I have christened myself, 'No luck.'"

"How do you happen to know all this?"

"Because it was all discussed in my presence. Ah! those things teach you what life is!"

Something more painful and distressing than all he had so far experienced, now oppressed the priest. It was a sort of choking sensation that was growing and growing and that would end by killing him, he thought. It did not come so much from the things he heard, as from the manner in which they were told and the criminal face that uttered them.

Between himself and this man, between his son and himself, he now felt a cesspool of moral iniquities which, for certain souls, are equal to a deadly poison. Was this his son? He could hardly believe it. He wanted all of the proofs, every one of them; he wanted to hear, to learn, to suffer all. He thought for the second time of the olive-grove that surrounded his bungalow and sent up a short supplication:

"Oh, Lord, help your servant."

Philippe-Auguste had finished his soup. He questioned:

"Aren't you going to eat, abbé?"

As the kitchen was away from the bungalow, in a little annex, and as Marguerite could not hear her curé's voice, the latter was in the habit of summoning her by a

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few taps struck on a Chinese gong hung on the wall. He grasped the leather hammer and knocked several times on the metal disc. A sound, weak at first, but which grew in volume until it became a shrill, horrible cry of distress, rose from the metal gong.

The servant appeared. She wore a surly expression and threw poisoned glances at the "mafouatan" as if her wonderful instinct of a faithful retainer had warned her of the tragedy that had befallen her master.

In her hands she held a platter on which was the broiled cat-fish, that gave forth a delicious fragrance. Father Vilbois, with a delicate stroke of the spoon, halved the fish from head to tail and offered the savory upper part to the child of his youth.

"I caught it a little while ago," he said, with a touch of pride in his voice, in spite of his great distress.

Marguerite remained rooted to the spot.

The priest continued:

"Bring me some wine, some of the good kind, the white wine of 'cap Corse.'" She almost rebelled and he had to assume a stern expression and repeat: "Go now, and bring two bottles." For, when he offered anyone wine, a rare pleasure for him, he always offered himself a bottle, too.

Radiant, Philippe-Auguste murmured:

"My! a fine idea! I haven't had a meal like this in a long time."

In a few minutes the servant returned.

To Father Vilbois they seemed an eternity, for he was consumed with a desire to know all, that burned him like hell-fire.

The bottles were uncorked, but still the woman remained in the room with her eyes glued on the stranger.

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"Leave us," commanded the priest.

She made believe she had not heard.

"I told you to leave us," repeated Father Vilbois sternly.

Only then did she go out.

Philippe-Auguste devoured his fish voraciously and his father watched him narrowly, more and more surprised and distressed at all the baseness he discovered in that face that so greatly resembled his own. The morsels of food that the priest conveyed to his lips remained in his mouth, for his contracted throat would not admit them, and he chewed them over and over, the while he racked his brain for the question he wanted answered the quickest. He ended by asking:

"What did she die of?"

"Consumption."

"Was she ill a long time?"

"About a year and a half."

"How did she contract it?"

"We never knew."

Both men paused. The abbé was thinking. So many things worried him, there were so many questions he wanted to ask. Since the day of their rupture, when he had tried to kill her, he had heard not a word. He had not wanted to know, for he had made up his mind to forget her and the days of his happiness; but now he experienced a jealous desire, almost a lover's eagerness to hear all.

He continued:

"She was not alone, was she?"

"No, she lived with him."

The old man gave a start.

"With him! With Pravallon?"

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"Why, yes."

And the man who had been deceived calculated that the woman who had proved faithless to him, had lived more than thirty years with his rival.

Almost without knowing what he was saying, he stammered:

"And were they happy?"

The young man snickered and replied:

"Oh! yes, with ups and downs. All would have been lovely without me. I always spoiled everything."

"How, and why?" questioned the priest.

"I've already told you. Because, up to the age of fifteen, he thought that I was his son. But the old man wasn't a fool and he soon discovered the likeness. Then came the scenes. I used to listen behind the door. He accused mother of having hoodwinked him. Mother would reply: 'Was it my fault? You knew very well when you took me that I was that other man's mistress.' That other man was you."

"Ah! so they spoke of me sometimes?"

"Yes, but never before me, excepting toward the very end, when mother knew she was doomed. They distrusted me, you see."

"And you learned at an early age, that your mother was in an irregular situation?"

"Of course, I'm not a dunce and never was one. You can't help knowing those things."

Philippe-Auguste filled his glass again and again and his eyes began to sparkle, for his long fast made the wine act rapidly.

The priest noticed it and was about to check him, when the thought that a drunken man is loquacious and

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out-spoken crossed his mind. He lifted the bottle and filled the young man's glass to the brim.

Marguerite entered with the chicken. Having put the platter on the table, she riveted her eyes on the tramp and exclaimed in an indignant voice:

"Why, he's drunk, monsieur le curé!"

"Oh! leave us alone," said the priest, "and go back to your kitchen."

She slammed the door as she went out.

He resumed:

"And what did your mother say about me?"

"Why, what a woman always says about the man she leaves for another one; that you were hard to get along with and that you would have led her a dreadful life with your ideas."

"Did she say that often?"

"Yes. Sometimes she would try to veil her meaning, but I always guessed it."

"And how were you treated at home?"

"Oh! very well at first and very badly afterwards. When mother realized that I was spoiling her plans, she threw me over."

"How's that?"

"How's that? Why, it's very simple. When I was about sixteen, I did some foolish things and those pigs put me in a reformatory to get rid of me."

He leaned his elbows on the table, rested his face in his hands and, as the wine had completely intoxicated him, he felt a desire to be talkative and boastful.

A smile played around his lips, an almost feminine smile, which the priest recognized. Not only did he recognize the mother's charm in this boy, but he felt it,

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that charm which long ago had won and ruined him. The boy now resembled his mother entirely, not so much by his features as by his glance, that was so fascinating and false, and by his smile, that seemed to part his lips in order to give passage to all the moral depravity within. Philippe-Auguste began:

"Ah! ah! ah! What a funny life I led after I came out of the reformatory! Any writer would be glad to pay me for it. Old man Dumas, in his Monte-Christo, never imagined stranger things than what happened to me."

He paused to reflect, with the philosophical gravity of a drunken man, and then he resumed slowly:

"If you want a fellow to turn out right, you must never send him to a reformatory, no matter what he's done, for he makes all sorts of acquaintances there. I did something real funny, only it didn't pan out right.

"I was loafing around with three fellows near the ford of Folac about nine o'clock in the evening; we were all a little drunk. Suddenly we see a wagon with all the occupants sound asleep in it; they were people from Martinon on their way home from town. I grasp the bridle and lead the whole outfit onto the ferryman's boat and then I push it into midstream. Of course, it made a lot of noise and the driver woke up. He had no idea where they were and started to whip up the nag which jumped into the stream. All hands were drowned. My pals told on me, although they laughed fit to break their sides, when they saw me do the trick. Of course, we didn't know it was going to turn out so bad. We only wanted to give the people a bath for a joke, you know. Since then, I've done worse than that, to get even with them, for they shouldn't have put me

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away for such a thing. But there's no use in telling the rest. I'll only tell you the last one, 'cause I know it will please you, papa."

Father Vilbois considered his son with terrified eyes and stopped eating.

Philippe-Auguste started to relate his story, but his father interrupted him.

"Not now," said he, "later on."

He turned and struck the gong.

Marguerite appeared instantly.

Her master spoke in such a stern tone that she bowed her head in meek submission.

"Bring in the lamp," he commanded, "and all the things that are still to be served, and then go to your kitchen and do not show yourself again until I ring for you."

She went out soon and returned with a white porcelain lamp covered with a green shade, a large piece of cheese and a dish of fruit. She set the things on the table and went out.

Then Father Vilbois turned to his son and said:

"Now, I'm ready to hear your tale."

Philippe-Auguste quietly filled his plate with dessert and his glass with wine. The second bottle was almost empty, although the priest had not touched a drop.

The young man, with a drunken stutter, resumed:

"Here's the last one. It's a mighty good one, too. I had come home again and I stayed . . . because they were afraid of me — Ah! one mustn't bother me — I'll do anything when I'm bothered — you know they lived together — and yet they really didn't —

"He had two residences, the Senator's residence and

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the lover's residence. But he lived with mother more'n he did at home, for he couldn't get along without her. Ah! she was a wise one — mother was — she knew how to hold a man! She had him body and soul and she kept him to the very last. What fools men are! Well, I came back and I dominated them through fear. I know how to get along, I do, and as for strength and smartness, I can hold my own with any man.

"Well, mother sickens and the old man takes her to a fine place near Meulan with a garden as big as a forest. She was sick about a year and a half, as I told you. Then the end came. He used to come out to see her every day from Paris and he was all broken up about her.

"Well, one morning they talked for about an hour and I couldn't imagine what it was all about.

"But suddenly mother called me to her and said:

"'I'm going to die and there's something that I wish to tell you, in spite of the count's advice.' She always called him the 'count.'

"'I will now reveal to you the name of your father, who is still living.'

"I had asked her that about a thousand times — a thousand times — and she always had refused — to tell me — I even remember that I beat her one day to make her talk, but she wouldn't. And then, to get rid of me, she told me that you had died poor, that you weren't much, anyway, a mistake of her youth, etc. She told it so well that I believed every word of it, too.

"So she says to me:

"'I will tell you your father's name.'

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"The old man, who was sitting in an armchair, said three times, just like that:

"'It is wrong, it is wrong, it is wrong, Rosette.'

"Mother sat up in bed. I can see her now, with her shining eyes and hectic cheeks, for she loved me all the same, and she retorted:

"'Then do something for him, Philippe!'

"When she addressed him she used to call him Philippe and me 'Auguste.'

"Then he began to shout like a madman:

"'For that good-for-nothing, that jail-bird, that — that — that —'

"And he called me so many names that he must have spent his whole life picking them up.

"I was getting hot, but mother made me keep still, and said:

"'You want him to starve, then, for you know that I haven't a sou.'

"He replied quietly:

"'Rosette, I've given you thirty-five thousand francs a year for thirty years; that amounts to more than a million. Through me you have been rich, cherished, and, I am bold enough to say it, happy. I owe nothing to that fellow who has spoiled our last years and he won't get anything from me. There's no use to harp on it. Tell him the name of his father, if you wish. I regret it, but I wash my hands of it.'

"Then mother turned to me. I was thinking: 'Good — I'm to find my real father at last — if he's got any money, I'm a made man —'

"She continued:

"'Your father, the baron de Vilbois, is to-day Father

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Vilbois, curé of Garandou, near Toulon. 'He was my lover when I left him for this man here.'

"And she told me everything, save the fact that she lied to you. But women, you know, never tell the whole truth."

The tramp was laughing, all unconscious of his depravity. He drained another glass and with a smiling face continued:

"Mother died two — days — later. We followed her remains to the cemetery, he and I — say, wasn't it funny — just he and I — and three servants.

"He cried like a calf all the way — we were side by side — anyone would have thought that we were father and son.

"Then we went back to the house all alone. I was thinking: 'I suppose I'll have to get out; I haven't a sou.' I had just fifty francs in the world. What could I do to get even, I wondered?

"He touched me on the arm and said:

"'I have something to say to you.'

"I followed him into the office. He sits down in front of his desk and begins to tell me that he is not going to be as hard on me as he had let my mother believe; he asks me not to bother you — That, of course, is our business, yours and mine — He offers me a thousand franc note — one thousand — what could a man like me do with a thousand francs? I saw a whole heap of bills in the drawer. The sight of them made me wild. I held out my fist to take the one he offered me, but instead of taking it I rushed at him, knocked him over and gagged him until he almost passed away; then, when I saw that it was almost all over with him, I bound a rag over his mouth and tied his hands. Then

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I undressed him, turned him over and — ha! ha! ha! I certainly did avenge you!—"

Philippe-Auguste paused for breath. His mirth had choked him and in the curve of his lips Father Vilbois saw once more the old smile of the woman who had captivated him.

"Then?" said he.

"Then — ha! ha! — There was a blazing grate-fire — it was in December — that mother — died — I took the poker and got it red hot — and then — I made crosses all over his back — I don't remember how many — and then I turned him over and decorated his stomach.

"Say, wasn't it funny, papa? — That's how they used to brand convicts. He wiggled like an eel — but I had gagged him so, he couldn't cry out. Then I grabbed the bills — twelve of them — with mine they made thirteen — an unlucky number. And I left the house, after telling the servants not to bother the count until dinner time, as he wished to sleep.

"I thought he wouldn't squeal and that he would be afraid of the scandal and all that. But I was mistaken.

"Four days later I was pinched in a restaurant. I got three years. That's why I wasn't able to look you up sooner."

He lifted his glass to his lips again, and stuttering so that the words were hardly intelligible he said:

"Now — papa — papa curé! Isn't it funny to have a curé for one's papa! — ah! ah! you must be nice to me, 'cause I'm not like the common ruck — and I fixed the old man — for you —"

The same anger which, years ago, had maddened

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Father Vilbois against his faithless mistress, now filled him at the sight of this abominable wretch. He who so often, in the name of the Lord, had pardoned the infamous secrets whispered in confession, felt pitiless now. And he no longer implored the merciful Lord, for he understood that no heavenly or earthly protection can save those upon whom such terrible misfortune falls.

All the ardor of his passionate heart and violent temperament, subdued by years of religious fervor, now rose against this wretched son of his, against the latter's resemblance to himself and to the debased mother who had made him like unto herself, and also against Fate, which had fastened this criminal to his paternal foot, like the ball of a galley-slave.

He foresaw everything with sudden clearness. He had been rudely awakened from his pious dreams.

Convinced that he would have to act energetically in order to be feared by this wretch, he clenched his teeth in fury and, forgetting the drunken condition of the man, said:

"Now, that you've told me all, I want you to listen to me. You will leave here to-morrow morning. You will live in a country which I will indicate to you and I will give you a little income that will keep you from starvation. It won't be much, for I haven't any money. If you disobey a single time, I'll be through with you and I'll see —"

Although in a stupor, Philippe-Auguste sensed the threat and the criminal instincts within him were suddenly roused. Between hiccoughs he spit out these words:

"Ah! papa — be careful now — you're a curé —

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I've got a hold on you — and you'll do well to go easy, like the rest!"

Father Vilbois started. And his whole powerful frame trembled with a wild desire to grapple with that monstrous being and break him like a reed. Shaking the table till the dishes rattled on it, he shouted:

"Ah! look out, look out — I'm not afraid of any one — you know —"

The drunken man lost his balance and almost fell to the floor. Feeling that he was about to fall and that he was in the priest's power, with a murderous look he stretched out his hand to grasp a knife on the table.

Father Vilbois saw the gesture and gave the table such a jolt that his son toppled over and fell prone on his back. The lamp rolled to the floor and went out. Complete darkness enveloped them so suddenly that it petrified them like some dreadful event.

The drunkard, crouching by the wall, remained motionless; and the priest sat on his chair surrounded by the blackness of night.

The dark veil that had spread over the room changed his fury into calm and other ideas, as somber and horrifying as the night, came into his mind.

Silence prevailed, the silence of the tomb, where nothing lives nor breathes. Not a sound came from outdoors, not even the soughing of the wind in the trees nor the distant barking of a shepherd dog.

This lasted a long, long time, perhaps an hour. Then, all of a sudden, the gong sounded. It gave forth one sharp, hard ring, which was followed by a loud noise like a body falling to the ground and dragging a chair with it.

Marguerite, who was on the lookout, rushed from

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the kitchen, but as soon as she opened the door she started back in alarm at the darkness. With trembling voice and palsied limbs, she called softly:

"M'sieu le curé, m' sieu le curé!"

No answer, not a sound.

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu," thought she, "what has happened, what have they done?"

She dared not advance into the room, she dared not go back into the kitchen for a light, and a mad desire to run away and shriek took possession of her, although she felt as though she could not move a muscle.

"M'sieu le curé, m'sieu le curé, it's I, Marguerite," she kept repeating.

But suddenly, in spite of her terror, an instinctive desire to help her master overwhelmed her and she rushed back to the kitchen to get a candle. When she returned, she stopped in the doorway. She first caught sight of the tramp lying near the wall, asleep or feigning sleep; then she saw the broken lamp, and then, under the table, the feet of Father Vilbois, who had evidently fallen on his back after striking the gong with his head.

Trembling with fear, her body shaken by convulsive spasms, Marguerite kept saying:

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, what is it?"

And cautiously advancing into the room, she suddenly slipped on something slimy.

She stooped and saw that the floor was red and that a dark fluid was running over it toward the door. She guessed that it was blood.

In abject terror she fled from the room, throwing away her candle as she ran.

She opened the front door and flew screaming from

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the house, in the direction of the village. She ran as fast as she could go, stumbling against the trees and filling the night with her terrified cries. Her shrill voice rang through the darkness like the sinister cry of the night-owl: "The mafouatan — the mafouatan — the mafouatan —"

When she reached the first village houses, some frightened men ran out and surrounded her, but she was unable to tell them anything, for she had completely lost her head.

Finally they realized that something had befallen the Father and a little troop of armed men started out toward the bungalow.

The little pink structure in the middle of the olive-grove had become a part of the surrounding darkness. Since the one gleam of light had been extinguished like an eye, the bungalow was lost in the night and could never have been found, save by the natives of the region.

Soon lights gleamed here and there in the darkness and cast long rays over the dry grass and the gnarled olive-trees, whose trunks looked like infernal monsters. The reflections soon showed a whitish mass hidden in the trees and a few minutes later the low pink wall of the bungalow was reached. Some peasants carrying lanterns and escorted by gendarmes with drawn revolvers, the constable, the mayor and Marguerite, who was supported by two men, for she had collapsed, composed the rescuing party.

When the front door, which stood wide open, was reached, the crowd hesitated. But the brigadier grabbed a lantern and went in, followed by the others. The servant had not lied.

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Blood covered the whole floor like a carpet. It had reached the vagabond's resting place and one of his legs and a hand lay in the dark liquid.

The father and son were both sleeping, one, the sleep from which there is no awakening, and the other, the stupefied sleep of the drunkard. The two gendarmes threw themselves on the latter and hand-cuffed him before he had time to realize what was happening. He rubbed his eyes in bewilderment, and when he saw the priest's body he looked terrified and uncomprehending.

"I wonder why he didn't escape?" said the mayor.

"He was too drunk," replied the brigadier.

And everybody was of the same opinion, for it would never have occurred to anyone that Father Vilbois might have taken his own life.

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ROGER'S REMEDY

WE were taking a stroll on the boulevards, Roger and I. Suddenly a vender bawled out in our ears:

"Buy a remedy to get rid of your mother-in-law! Buy a remedy!"

I stopped short, and turning to my companion, said:

"There's something which reminds me of a question I've wanted to ask you for some time. What on earth is 'Roger's remedy,' that your wife talks so much about? She jokes about it so amusingly that I believe it must be some sort of a magic drug of which you alone have the secret. Every time anyone speaks in her presence of some young chap who has gone the pace too much, she turns to you and says laughingly:

"'Somebody ought to tell him about Roger's remedy.'

"And the funniest part of all is that you blush to the roots of your hair every time."

Roger replied:

"Yes, and with reason, and if my wife knew what she was talking about, she would keep still, I assure you. But I'll tell you the story, old man. You know that I married a widow with whom I was madly in love. My wife has always been rather broad in her conversation, and before I made her my better-half we often had some spicy chats. Of course, it was perfectly proper, as she was a widow. She was very fond of funny stories and 'risqué' anecdotes. Sins of that kind

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aren't very great, anyway. Well, she is audacious and I am rather bashful, you know, and so, before our marriage, she would tease me with all sorts of embarrassing questions and jokes which could not be easily answered.

"Perhaps it was that very audacity which captivated me, for I was head over heels in love with her and she knew it, the little rascal.

"We decided that we would be married without fuss and feathers and that we would forego the honeymoon trip. After the religious ceremony, we would give a luncheon to our witnesses and then would take a tête-à-tête drive and quietly go back for dinner to my apartment in the rue du Helder.

"Well, after the few wedding guests had departed, we got into the carriage and I instructed the coachman to drive us to the Bois de Boulogne. It was the end of June and the weather was delightful.

"As soon as we were all to ourselves she began to laugh.

"'My dear Roger,' said she, 'now's the time to be gallant. Let's see how you'll go about it.'

"I immediately became paralyzed. I took her hand and kissed it and said: 'I love you' once or twice. I even kissed her neck, but the people passing us embarrassed me. She kept teasing me in a bewitching way and saying: 'Well, what next? What comes next? . . . This 'what comes next' almost drove me crazy. It wasn't in broad daylight, in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, that I could — you understand me.

"She saw my embarrassment and thought it screamingly funny.

"From time to time she would remark:

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"'I'm afraid I've made a dreadful mistake. You really worry me.'

"I, too, was beginning to worry. When anyone embarrasses me I'm absolutely good for nothing.

"During dinner she was charming. I sent my man away so that we might be more perfectly at ease. Oh! we were quite proper, of course, but you know how silly lovers are! We drank out of the same glass and ate from the same plate and with the same fork. We amused ourselves by nibbling wafers at both ends so that our lips would meet in the middle.

"She remarked:

"'I would like a little champagne.'

"I had forgotten all about it. The cooler stood on the sideboard. I clutched the bottle, broke the wire and pressed the cork. But the cork wouldn't come out. Gabrielle began to smile.

"'A bad omen,' she murmured.

"I pressed my thumb to the cork once more and pushed it to one side and then to the other, but without the least result. And all of a sudden, I broke it off at the neck of the bottle.

"'Poor Roger,' sighed Gabrielle.

"I took a corkscrew and dug it into the remainder of the cork. Then I pulled and pulled, but the old thing refused to move! I was compelled to call Prosper. By this time my wife was laughing heartily and repeating:

"'Well — well — well — I see that I can rely on you.'

"She was half intoxicated.

"She was more than three-quarters so after the coffee.

"The wedding-night of a widow differing from that

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of a young girl, my wife simply went into our bedroom and said:

"'Just smoke your cigar for a little while.'

"When I joined her I really lacked confidence in myself. I felt nervous and ill at ease.

"I assumed the place I was entitled to. My wife said nothing. She watched me with a smile on her lips and a visible desire to make fun of me. This irony, at such a time and place, upset me dreadfully and really took the starch out of me.

"When Gabrielle noticed my — plight, she did nothing to help matters; on the contrary, she only remarked with a little indifferent air:

"'Are you just as clever as this every day?'

"I could not help retorting:

"'You are a dreadful tease.'

"Then she began to laugh and laugh till she was exhausted.

"Of course I must have cut a most ridiculous figure and I certainly felt like a fool.

"From time to time she would stop for breath and say:

"'Just a little courage — and energy — my poor friend.'

"And then she would go off into another fit of hysterical laughter.

"Finally I became so exasperated at myself and at her that I knew I would strike her if I didn't give up the struggle. I leaped out of bed and dressed without saying a word.

"She had quieted down by this time and, realizing that I was angry, she asked:

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"Why, here you are. What was the matter with you?"

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"'What on earth are you doing? Where are you going?'

"I made no reply. I left the house. I wanted to murder some one, to get even with the world, to commit some sort of rash act. I was striding along at a great rate, when suddenly the idea to go to a house entered my mind.

"Who knows? It might be a test, an experience, a training. Anyway, it would be a revenge! If ever my wife was to deceive me I would have the satisfaction of knowing that I had forestalled her.

"I did not waver. I knew of a love hostelry close by and I went there like some people who jump into the ocean to see if they have forgotten how to swim.

"I swam, and most satisfactorily, too. And I stayed quite some time, hugely enjoying the idea of my revenge. When I hit the sidewalk again the night was fading into early dawn. I was quite sure of myself now. I felt perfectly satisfied and ready for new acts of valor.

"I walked home slowly and gently opened the door of my room.

"Gabrielle, with her elbow on the pillow, was reading a book. She raised her head and said in a timid voice:

"'Why, here you are. What was the matter with you?'

"I made no reply and triumphantly resumed the place I had abandoned.

"My wife was astounded and ever afterwards believed that I had recourse to some mysterious secret. And now she always refers to 'Roger's remedy' as if it were some infallible scientific process.

"But, alas! that was ten years ago, and to-day that

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remedy would not work so well, I fear, with me, anyway.

"But, if you should have a friend who apprehends the emotions of his wedding night, tell him of my remedy and assure him that between the ages of twenty and thirty-five nothing is so sure to be successful."

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THE CLOSET

AS we all sat over our after-dinner coffee the conversation drifted to light women, for what else can a lot of men talk about?

One of us remarked:

"A rather strange thing happened to me in regard to this."

And he began his story.

"One evening last winter I experienced one of those awful spells of depression that sometimes take hold of one's body and soul. I was home all alone and knew that if I gave up to the feeling I would have one of those crises of sadness that end in suicide if they repeat themselves too often. I put on my overcoat and went out, without the least idea of what I was going to do. I walked to the boulevards and strolled past the half empty cafés, for it was raining, or rather misting, and the drizzle dampened one's spirit as well as one's clothes. It wasn't one of those good showers that make the passersby seek shelter under doorways, but one of those rains that are so fine that one does not feel the drops, one of those humid rains that deposit tiny beads of moisture on you and soon cover everything with a froth of icy water.

"What could I possibly do to kill time? I walked and walked, trying meanwhile to think of a place where I could spend an hour or two, and discovering for the first time in my life that there is not a place of amusement to go to of an evening, in whole Paris. Finally I

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made up my mind to drift into the Folies-Bergères, that amusing market-place of light women.

"There were not many people in the big music-hall. In the long horseshoe promenade were only a few stragglers of small means, whose common extraction was flagrantly depicted by their walk, their clothes, the cut of their hair and beards, their hats, their complexions. Once in a while the eye rested on some well-groomed fellow whose clothes looked as if they belonged to him.

"As for the women, they were the same one always meets there. Awful women, homely, fagged out and flabby, walking about with the look of the hunter in their eyes and a ridiculous expression of haughty contempt on their faces. I wonder why they always wear that silly expression? I was thinking that not one of those flabby creatures, puffy in some places and emaciated in others, with big stomachs and thin legs, was worth the louis she has a hard time getting, after she has asked five.

"But suddenly I saw a little woman who looked really nice and attractive. She wasn't exactly youthful, but she seemed fresh and piquant. I stopped her and, in a foolish way, without a thought, made my price for the night. I did not want to go back to my lonely abode and preferred the company and embrace of this jade.

"So I followed her. She lived in a great big house in the rue des Martyrs. The gas was out in the hall when we arrived. I walked up the stairs slowly, guided by the swish of her skirts and lighting matches as I went. I stumbled many times on the rickety steps and inwardly cursed my foolishness.

"She stopped on the fourth floor and after she had

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closed the front door behind us, she turned to me and asked:

"'So you're going to stay with me all night?'

"'Why, yes,' I replied, 'that was the agreement, wasn't it?'

"'It's all right, dear. I only wanted to know. Just wait here, I'll be back in a minute.'

"And she left me standing in the dark.

"I heard her shut two doors and thought I distinguished the sound of voices. This surprised and worried me. The idea of a bully crossed my mind. But, as I have a strong right arm, I thought to myself: 'Well, let come what may.'

"I listened with the greatest attention.

"Somebody was moving about on tiptoe and with infinite precautions. Another door opened and I thought again that I heard a whispered conversation. Presently she reëntered the room with a candle in her hand.

"'Come in,' she said.

"This speech meant taking possession of the premises for the time being. I went in, and passing through a dining-room that only existed for show, I entered into a bedroom that differed in no way from the usual room of that sort, a bedroom with repp curtains and a silk counterpane that bore several suspicious stains.

"She continued:

"'Make yourself comfortable, dear.'

"I eyed the room doubtfully, but discovered nothing unusual about it. She disrobed so quickly that she was in bed before I had time to remove my overcoat. She laughed:

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"'Why, what's the matter with you? Have you been changed into a pillar of salt? Hurry up.'

"I imitated her alacrity and soon joined her.

"Five minutes later I was crazy to get out of that bed and go home. But the overpowering sensation of depression and lassitude that had overtaken me earlier in the evening, robbed me of all energy to get up, in spite of the keen disgust I felt for this public bed. The sensual spell which this woman had cast over me, beneath the glare of the music-hall lights, vanished in my arms and nothing remained save the vulgar courtesan, similar to all her sisters and whose kisses smelled of garlic.

"I began to talk to her.

"'Have you been here long?' I asked.

"'Six months last January,' she replied.

"'Where did you live before?'

"'In the rue Clauzel. But I left there because the janitress was mean to me.'

"And she started to tell me a long story about how the janitress had gossiped about her.

"But, all of a sudden, I heard a noise near the head of the bed. First it was a sigh and then a distinct sound, like someone moving on a chair.

"I sat bolt upright in bed and asked:

"'What's that noise?'

"With perfect calm she replied:

"'Don't worry, dear, it's the woman in the next flat. The walls are so thin you can hear everything. What rotten houses these are. They're made of paper.'

"My inertia was so strong that I slid back under the bed-clothes; and we resumed our conversation.

"Worried by the foolish curiosity that impels us men to question these women about their first false step, to

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lift the veil on their first mistake, as if we wished to find a distant trace of innocence, whereby we might love them in the recollection of their past modesty and candor, I pressed her with questions regarding her first lovers.

"I knew that she would lie to me. But what did it matter? Among all her lies I might discover something touching and true.

"'Now, tell me who he was,' I demanded.

"'He was a boating-man, dear.'

"'Ah! Tell me about it. Where were you?'

"'I was at Argenteuil.'

"'What were you doing there?'

"'I was a waitress in a restaurant.'

"'What restaurant?'

"'At the "Sweet Water Sailor." Do you know it?'

"'Why yes, Bonafan's the proprietor.'

"'Yes, that's it.'

"'And how did the boating-man court you?'

"'While I was making his bed. He got the best of me.'

"But I suddenly recalled to mind the theory of a friend of mine, a physician, who was at the same time a philosopher and an observer, and whose work in a large hospital brought him in daily contact with ill-famed women and ruined girls, with all the misery and shame to which womankind is subjected by men who have money to spend.

"'Always,' he had said to me, 'always a girl is ruined by a man of her own class in life. I've volumes of observations on the subject. People accuse the rich of gathering the flower of innocence of poor young

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girls. It is not true. The rich play second fiddle to the others and if they gather any flower at all, it's only the second efflorescence.'

"So, turning to my companion, I began to laugh.

"'Oh! I know your story. The boating-man wasn't the first one.'

"'Oh, yes, I swear he was, dear.'

"'You are lying. Tell me everything.'

"She seemed astonished and hesitated.

"I continued:

"'I'm something of a sorcerer, fair one; I'm a somnambulist. If you do not tell me the truth, I'll put you to sleep and make you give up your secret.'

"She was scared, for she was stupid, as all women of that kind are.

"'How did you guess?' she stammered.

"'Go ahead now,' I retorted.

"'Oh, the first time was hardly anything. It was at the country fair. The restaurant-keeper had engaged an extra "chef," M. Alexandre. As soon as he arrived he turned the place upside down. He ordered every one around from the boss to the kitchen-maid, as if he were a king — He was a big, fine-looking man, who couldn't keep quiet a minute and who kept yelling all the time: "Bring me some eggs, some butter, some madeira!" And we had to bring the things on the run, too, or he'd say things that made us blush under our very skirts.

"'After the day's work was done, he sat down and smoked his pipe in front of the door. And as I was passing with a whole lot of dishes he called to me and said: "Come on, kid, walk down to the river with me and show me the place, will you?"'

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"'I, like a fool, went with him, and hardly had we reached the river before he got the best of me. It all happened so quickly that I didn't know what he was doing. He left by the nine o'clock train that night and I never saw him again.'

"'Was that all?' I asked.

"'Oh!' she stammered, 'I really think he's the father of Florentin!'

"'Who's Florentin?' said I.

"'He's my boy,' she replied.

"'Ah! I see. And you made the boating-man believe that he was his father, I suppose?'

"'Why, certainly!'

"'Did the boating-man have money?'

"'Yes, he settled an income of three hundred francs on Florentin.'

"I was beginning to enjoy myself. I continued:

"'That's all very nice, my dear; you girls aren't as stupid as we think you are. And how old is Florentin now, pray?'

"'He'll soon be twelve,' she replied, 'and is going to be confirmed next spring.'

"'That's fine. And ever since that time, I dare say, you've practiced your profession conscientiously?'

"She sighed and muttered:

"'One does what one can—'

"But suddenly a loud noise in the room made me leap out of bed. It was as if somebody had fallen and was trying to scramble to his feet again by holding to the wall.

"I had clutched the candle and was looking around the room in anger and bewilderment. I listened breathlessly but all was still again.

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"She had gotten out of bed, too, and she tried to persuade me to return, by whispering:

"'It's nothing, dear, nothing at all!'

"But I had at last discovered from whence came the noise.

"I walked straight to a door at the head of the bed, opened it — and caught sight of a wretched little boy sitting beside a big chair, from which he had just fallen. The little fellow stared at me with big, frightened eyes, and opening his arms to his mother, began to whimper:

"'It wasn't my fault, mama; it wasn't my fault. I went to sleep and fell off. Don't scold me, mama, it wasn't my fault!'

"I turned to the woman and said:

"'What does this mean, pray?'

"She was distressed and embarrassed. In a strangled voice she replied:

"'Well, what can you expect? I don't make enough to board him away from home! I'm forced to keep him with me and I guess I don't make enough to pay for a separate room for him. He sleeps with me when I'm alone. When a visitor comes for an hour or two, I put him in the closet and he keeps quiet; he knows. But when a man stays all night, like you, it hurts his back, poor child, to sit on a straight chair 'till morning. — I'd just like to see you. How'd you like to sleep on a chair all night? I guess you wouldn't like it much, either!'

"Her voice was raised to an angry pitch.

"The little fellow continued to sob. He was a poor, miserable, little waif, the very child of the closet, of the cold, dark closet, the child that, from time to time,

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crept into the maternal bed when it was empty of visitors, to warm his little body.

"I felt like crying myself, and I spent the rest of the night in my own bed."

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THE STORY OF A DOG

MME. LEFEVRE was a country lady, a widow, half peasant, who wore ribbon bows and feathers on her hats. She was one of those persons who assume airs in public and mask their sordid souls under comical and pretentious exteriors, just as they conceal their coarse, red hands in écru silk gloves.

She had a servant named Rose, a simple, rural soul.

The two women lived in a little green-shuttered house on a lonely road in Normandy, in the very heart of the Caux region.

As they owned a little plot of ground in front of the house, they raised a few vegetables.

One night, some marauder got into the garden and made away with a dozen onions.

As soon as Rose discovered the theft, she called "madame," who came down in her cotton petticoat.

Great astonishment and horror prevailed. Someone had actually robbed Mme. Lefèvre! So thieves were abroad! They would surely come again! And the two frightened women looked in bewilderment at the footprints in the onion-patch and made a thousand conjectures: "See, they passed here! There are footprints on the wall; they jumped into the flower-bed, too."

And they thought with dread of the future. How would they ever be able to sleep quietly now?

The news of the theft soon spread through the neighborhood. People began to drop in to discuss the event.

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Each newcomer had to listen to the voluble observations and ideas of both women.

A farmer who lived nearby, made the following suggestion:

"You ought to have a dog."

There, that was true, they ought to have a dog, if it were only to give the alarm! Heavens! Not a big dog! What would they do with a big dog? His keep would ruin them. But a little one, a little snappy one.

As soon as the last neighbor departed, Mme. Lefèvre discussed the idea of having a dog. After thinking the matter over, she found a good many objections to the plan. She was horrified at the thought of a bowl of food for the dog every day, for she belonged to the race of miserly rural ladies who carry centimes in their pockets for the ostensible purpose of giving alms to the roadside beggars and swelling the contribution in church every Sunday. But Rose, who loved animals, brought forth her reasons and defended them with much skill. So it was decided that they would keep a dog, a very small canine.

The search for a suitable dog began forthwith. No desirable animal could be found, however, for there were nothing but large dogs in the entire region, dogs that consumed an enormous amount of food.

The grocer of Rolleville owned a small one, but he wanted four francs for it, to cover the expense of raising it.

Mme. Lefèvre declared that she was willing to feed a dog, but that she would never buy one.

But the baker, who was familiar with the situation, one morning brought in his wagon a strange-looking little yellow cur, with stubby legs and a long body, a

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pointed face and a big curly tail, almost as large as the entire dog. One of his customers was trying to get rid of it, he explained. Mme. Lefèvre thought that this hideous specimen of dogdom was beautiful, because it cost nothing. Rose kissed it and inquired its name. The baker replied: "Pierrot."

He was housed in a large soap box and Rose offered him a bowl of water. He lapped it. Then they gave him a crust of bread. He ate it.

Mme. Lefèvre, who was watching the proceedings askance, thought to herself: "When he gets used to the place, I will let him run around loose, so's he can pick up his food in the village."

They soon gave him his liberty, but this fact did not prevent him from being famished.

Besides, he never barked, excepting to ask for his dinner; but then he would bark unceasingly.

Anyone could get into the garden. Pierrot would trot over and fawn before each newcomer, but he would never utter a sound.

Notwithstanding this, Mme. Lefèvre had become accustomed to him. She even began to like him and to feed him at meal times with pieces of bread dipped in the gravy on her plate.

But she had never given a thought to the tax on dogs and when a man presented himself and demanded eight francs — yes, eight francs, madame — for that little measly cur, that didn't even bark, she almost fainted away.

She made up her mind on the spot to get rid of Pierrot.

All the neighbors for miles around refused to take him. Then they determined, for the lack of any other

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means of getting rid of him, to take him to the marl-pit. In the middle of a large plain, was a sort of hut, or rather a thatched roof placed on the ground. It was the entrance to the marl-pit. A well, twenty feet deep, was dug under the roof and terminated in a series of long mine drifts.

Once every year, men went down into this quarry, when it was time to marl the soil. All the year round it was used as a sort of pound for stray dogs and every once in a while, when a person passed the pit, he heard plaintive wails or desperate, furious barks and lamentable calls, issuing from the subterranean prison.

The hunting and shepherd dogs ran madly from this haunted pit and if you leaned over it, you were immediately assailed by a terrible odor of putrefaction.

Horrible dramas took place in its depths.

Sometimes, after an animal had been there for ten or twelve days and was exhausted and near death, his only food having been his predecessors in the pit, a larger, stronger and fresher animal was lowered into it. There they stood, famished, with shining eyes. They watched each other, hesitating and eager. But hunger egged them on; they battled a long time and then the stronger dog would overcome the weaker one and devour him.

When they determined to throw Pierrot into the marl-pit, they looked around for an executioner.

The man who broke stones on the road demanded fifty centimes for his trouble; the sum was absurdly exaggerated, thought Mme. Lefèvre; the neighbor's boy said he would do the job for half that amount; that was also too much; and Rose having remarked that it would be better if they took him themselves, so that he

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might escape harsh treatment on the way and an intimation of his awful fate, they decided they would carry him to the pit that very evening.

So they set out across the plain and soon reached the pit. Mme. Lefèvre leaned over it in order to find out if it already contained a tenant — no — no other dog was there; Pierrot, then, would be the sole occupant.

Then Rose, who was crying, gave him a last kiss and dropped him into the hole, and both women leaned over and listened breathlessly.

First they heard a dull thud; then a wail from the wounded animal and finally a series of moans and desperate, pitiful cries.

He barked and barked for liberty!

The women all of a sudden were seized with wild remorse and fear, and they started for home on a run, as if they were possessed. As Rose ran faster than her mistress, the latter kept screaming: "Wait for me, Rose, wait for me!"

But Rose, unheeding, did not stop until she got home.

They spent a dreadful night.

Mme. Lefèvre dreamed that she sat down to dinner, but when she lifted the lid of the soup-tureen, she found Pierrot lying in it. He jumped at her and bit her nose.

She awoke and thought she heard him barking. She listened attentively, but found out that she had been mistaken.

She went to sleep again; but, presently, she dreamed that she was in a long, long road. All of a sudden, she saw a big basket standing in the middle of the road and in her dream she was afraid of it.

Finally, however, she opened the basket and Pierrot, who was concealed therein, leaped out and caught her

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hand in his teeth; and she ran down the road screaming, with the dog dangling from her bleeding wrist.

She awoke at dawn, in a terrible state of mind and as soon as she was dressed, rushed off to the pit.

Pierrot was still barking; he had barked all night. Mme. Lefèvre began to sob and call him all the pet names she could think of. And Pierrot answered as best he could in his own language.

She made up her mind to see him at all costs and vowed she would make him happy for the rest of his life.

She went to the man who had charge of the pit and told him her story. He listened without a word. When she had finished, he said:

"You want your dog, do you? It'll be four francs."

Mme. Lefèvre gave a gasp. All her sorrow vanished under the shock: "Four francs! Well, the idea! Four francs!"

He replied: "D'ye think I'm going to get my ropes and pulleys and the whole outfit and take my assistant and go and haul out yer dog for the fun of it? What'd yer throw him in fer?"

She went away boiling over with indignation. Four francs! The idea!

As soon as she got home, she called Rose and told her of the man's demands.

Rose, resigned to anything, said: "Four francs! that's a sum, madame."

Then she added: "Supposing we take the poor thing something to eat, so's he won't starve?"

Mme. Lefèvre approved the idea with delight and so they started off again with a large chunk of buttered bread.

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They cut it into small pieces and took turns in throwing it to the dog.

As soon as he finished one piece, he would bark for more.

They went back the next day and the day after, and then every day. But they would make only one trip.

But one morning, just as they were going to throw in the first piece, they heard terrible barking in the pit. Two dogs were there now; some one had thrown in another dog, a big one.

Rose called: "Pierrot!" and Pierrot answered. Then she threw in some bread, but each time a piece landed in the pit, there was a terrific fight and they could hear Pierrot whine pitifully as the other dog attacked him and took away his food.

Although they cried: "It's for you, Pierrot!" it was evident that Pierrot got worsted in the battle.

Nonplussed, the two women looked at each other and Mme. Lefèvre remarked sourly: "I really can't feed all the dogs of the place; I'll have to stop it." And suffocated at the idea of all those dogs living off her, she walked away, munching the bread that had remained in the bottom of the basket.

And poor Rose followed her, wiping her eyes on the corner of her blue apron.

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OUR FRIEND PATIENCE

"DO you know what has become of Leremy?"

"He's a captain in the Dragons."

"And Pinson?"

"He's a sub-prefect."

"And Recollet?"

"He's dead."

We tried to recall other names, the owners of which rose before our mind's eye in all their college paraphernalia. Some of these chums we had found in later years, all married and the fathers of families and these chance meetings had always left us a disagreeable impression, as they vividly brought to mind how short life is and how everything passes.

My friend queried:

"And Patience, what has become of Patience?"

I uttered a howl.

"Oh! Patience. Just let me tell you. About four or five years ago, I was inspecting in Limoges and was at the big café on the place du Théâtre, having dinner one evening. I was terribly bored. The business men of the town straggled in by twos and threes, for their "absinthe" or their "vermouth," and talked loudly of their own and their competitors' affairs. Sometimes they laughed uproariously and sometimes they lowered their voices to speak of some delicate or important matter.

"What will I do after dinner?" thought I. And I looked forward with dread to the long evening to be spent in this provincial town. I thought of the walk

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through the long, dreary, silent streets, of the terrible sensation of depression that comes over the lonely traveler when he looks about him in a strange place and sees nothing but strange faces and people who are foreign to him by the very cut of their clothes, as well as their local speech and habits. Then there is also the sadness that comes from the different houses and shops, the peculiar carriages, that makes you feel like hurrying on as if you were lost in some dangerous country, and makes you wish you were back in your hotel, in your nasty hotel-room that is full of a thousand odors, where the bed makes you recoil and the wash-basin is filled with dust.

I was thinking of all this and watching the man light the lamps in the street. My sadness was increased by the falling shadows. What was I going to do after dinner? I was alone, all alone, lost in this place.

Presently, a large man sat down at the table next to mine, and bawled in a deep voice:

"Waiter, bring me my bitters!"

The "my" sounded like a thunderclap. I realized at once that everything in life belonged to him, mind you and to no one else, and that he had his own character, by gad, his own appetite, his own trousers, *his own* everything, which belonged to him more absolutely and more completely than anyone else. Then he surveyed the surroundings with a complacent air. When the waiter brought his bitters, he ordered:

"My paper!"

"What paper does he read?" I wondered. Its title would surely reveal to me his opinions, his theories, his hobbies, his little foibles.

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The waiter brought "The Times." I was astonished! Why "The Times," a grave, dull, doctrinary organ?

Thought I:

"He must be a real good bourgeois, who leads a methodical, regular life."

He adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses on his nose and lounged back in his seat, but before he opened his paper, he threw a glance around the café. He caught sight of me and began to look at me so intently that I felt embarrassed. I was even going to ask him to explain the reason of his scrutiny when he suddenly bawled:

"Well, upon my word, if it isn't Gontran Lardois."

"Yes, monsieur," said I, "you are quite right."

Then he jumped up and came over to where I was sitting, and held out his hand.

"Well, old man, how do you do?"

I felt very uncomfortable, for I didn't recognize him at all. So I stammered:

"Why — I'm very well — how are you?"

He laughed.

"I bet you don't remember me?"

"No, I really don't — although I think —"

"Well, well," he bawled, slapping me on the shoulder, "I'm Patience, Robert Patience, your college chum."

Then I recognized him. Yes, it was Robert Patience, my college friend. I remembered him now. I shook hands with him.

"And so you're well?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "I'm feeling fine."

His smile was triumphant.

"What are you doing here?" he inquired.

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I told him that I was an inspector of Finances going my rounds. Pointing to the red ribbon in my buttonhole, he said:

"So, you've succeeded, hey?"

"Yes," I said, "I've made my way pretty well, and you?"

"Oh! I've done splendidly, splendidly."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm in business."

"And you're making money, eh?"

"Lots, old man, I'm very wealthy. But come around and have lunch with me to-morrow at noon, 17 rue du Coq-qui-Chante; I'll show you my house."

He paused and seemed to be hesitating.

"Are you still the good fellow of old?" he asked.

"Why — I hope so," said I.

"Not married, are you?"

"No."

"So much the better, then. And you're still fond of fun and all the rest?"

I was beginning to think that he was dreadfully common. Nevertheless, I replied:

"Why, yes."

"And you've still an eye for the girls?"

"I should say so, old man."

He laughed a satisfied laugh.

"Well, well, so much the better. Do you remember our first escapade in Bordeaux, when we had supper at Roupie's? Say, didn't we have a time?"

I should say I did remember the time we had that night, and the recollection of it brought a smile to my lips. Other times came back to me, and we continued this way:

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"Say, do you remember the day we shut up the under-teacher in père Latoque's cellar?"

And then Patience roared and struck the table with his fist and related reminiscences after reminiscences.

"Yes — yes. And do you remember the mug the professor of geography, M. Marin, made, when we set off a firecracker just as he was discoursing about the principal volcanoes of our globe?"

Suddenly I inquired:

"Are you married, Patience?"

"I've been married ten years," he bawled, "and I've got four children and wonderful kids they are. But you'll see them to-morrow, and their mother, too."

We were talking at the top of our voices. The other customers of the place turned around in astonishment to look at us.

All of a sudden, my friend pulled out a watch as big as a pumpkin and cried:

"Upon my word, I'm sorry, but I'll have to leave you; I'm busy in the evening."

He rose, took both my hands in his big fists and shook them as if he were going to pull them off.

"To-morrow at twelve," said he.

"Very well," I replied.

I spent the morning working. The Treasurer wanted to retain me for luncheon, but I told him that I had a previous engagement with a friend. As he had to go out, he offered to accompany me.

I asked:

"Can you tell me how to find the rue du Coq-qui-Chante?"

"Yes," he replied, "it's a five-minute walk. As I have nothing special to do, I'll show you the way."

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So we started off.

We soon reached the street. It was a wide, pretty thoroughfare near the outskirts of the town. I looked at the houses and soon discovered number 17. It was a large, private house, with a garden in the rear. The front was decorated with Italian frescoes in rather poor taste, I thought. There were a lot of goddesses holding urns and some were draped in nothing but a cloud. Two stone cupids supported a shield on which was carved the house number.

Said I to the Treasurer:

"Here's where I'm going."

And I held out my hand to say good-bye. He made a strange and abrupt motion, but said nothing and shook hands with me.

I rang the bell. A maid appeared.

"Monsieur Patience, please," said I.

"This is the house. Do you wish to see him personally?"

"Why, yes."

The hall was decorated with paintings due to the brush of some local artist. A number of Pauls and Virginias were embracing each other under palm-trees bathed in a pinkish atmosphere. A hideous Oriental lantern hung from the ceiling. There were several doors which were concealed by gaudy portières.

But what impressed me most, was the odor of the place. It was a sickish odor, redolent of rice powder and mould, an undefinable scent floating in a heavy, oppressive atmosphere that reminded me of a Turkish Bath. Following the maid, who led the way, I ascended a marble staircase covered with an imitation

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Oriental carpet, and was ushered into a gorgeous parlor.

It was richly furnished, but it showed the inelegant ostentation of a lewd "parvenu." A number of really fine engravings of the past century hung on the walls, representing various half-clad ladies with high, powdered coiffures, being surprised in unconventional attitudes by gallant gentlemen. Another lady, reclining on a much rumpled bed, was playing with a little dog; still another one was gently repulsing the advances of a too enterprising lover. One drawing showed only four feet, the bodies to which they belonged being concealed by a curtain. The large room was surrounded by a downy couch and was saturated with the same odor I had noticed in the hall. Something extremely questionable seemed to emanate from the very walls of the place, from the furniture, the hangings, the exaggerated luxury.

I went over to the window to look out into the garden. It was large and beautifully shady. A broad path wound around a big lawn, in the middle of which played a fountain, and then lost itself in some bushes, only to appear again farther away. And suddenly, way off at the other end of the garden, between a double row of trees, three women appeared. They were walking abreast, with arms linked, and were dressed in loose, filmy morning-gowns. Two of them were blondes and the third one was a brunette. They soon disappeared under the trees. I was astonished and delighted by the charming apparition and it gave rise in me to a whole train of poetical thoughts. These beautiful visions had stayed but a moment in the gorgeous park and had vanished. In an instant rose be-

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fore my mind's eye the fair ladies of the past century, wandering about in their wonderful gardens. And my thoughts lingered lovingly on that happy, witty, tender age, when life was so delightful and women's lips so kissable.

A deep voice brought me out of my dream. I turned and caught sight of Patience, who had entered the room and was holding out his hand in welcome, with a radiant smile on his face.

He looked at me for a minute with the sneaky air which usually accompanies the telling of a love secret and then, with a wide and sweeping motion, the very gesture of a Napoleon, he indicated the gorgeous parlor, the garden, the three women walking in it and triumphantly exclaimed:

"And just think that I started with almost nothing — my wife and my sister-in-law."

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THE poor people lived precariously on the husband's small salary. Two children had been born to them since their marriage and the original financial difficulties had developed into the shabby-genteel poverty of aristocratic people trying to keep up their position in life.

Hector de Gribelin had been brought up in the provinces, in the ancestral manor, by an old priest. His people were not wealthy, but they managed to keep up appearances.

When he was twenty, his parents looked for a position for him and found one in the Navy Department at a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year.

He had foundered on this reef, like many another man who has not been fitted by early training for the battle of life. He was like all those who look upon existence through a veil, who are ignorant of means and ways and in whom special faculties and iron energy have not been cultivated since childhood.

The three first years in the Navy Department were horrible. He had looked up some friends of his family, old people without money and considerably behind the times, who lived in the dreary, aristocratic streets of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In this way he had created for himself a small social circle.

Strangers to modern life, humble and proud, these needy aristocrats lived on the upper floors of those old houses. From the ground floor to the top, these apart-

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ment houses contained titled families; but money appeared to be as scarce at the top as at the bottom.

Eternal prejudices, the constant preoccupation of rank, the worry to keep up, haunted all these old families, whom the inertia of their male members had brought to ruin. In these surroundings, Hector de Gribelin had met a young girl of noble birth but great poverty and had made her his wife.

They had two children in four years.

During four more years the couple, constantly harassed by financial worries, knew no other distraction than an occasional walk on the Champs-Elysées, on Sundays, and an occasional play during the theater season, thanks to a friend of Hector's, who gave them complimentary tickets.

But, toward the end of Spring, some supplementary work was given de Gribelin by his chief and he received a gratuity of three hundred francs.

When he brought the money home to his wife, he said:

"My dear Henriette, we must get something out of this. Let's take the children to the country for the day."

And, after a lengthy discussion, it was decided that they would go on a picnic.

"Well," cried Hector, "as this doesn't happen every day, I'll hire a carriage for you and the children and I'll take a saddle-horse. The exercise will do me good."

And all the week they spoke of nothing else but the coming picnic.

Every evening, when Hector got home from the Navy Department, he grabbed his eldest son, straddled

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him on his knee and jumping him up and down with all his might, would say:

"This is how Papa will look next Sunday, when we go to the country."

And all day long the youngster would drag chairs around the apartment, shouting:

"This is Papa on the horsey."

Even the maid looked at "monsieur" with round eyes when she thought of how he was going to accompany them on horse-back and listened breathlessly when, at mealtimes, he told about his former experiences with horses, at home. Oh! he had had splendid training and when in the saddle, he could subdue any fractious beast.

He would rub his hands and say to his wife:

"I hope they will give me a nervous horse. I'll let you see how I ride, and if you like, we'll come back through the Champs-Elysées, when the crowd is coming home from the Bois. We'll look so well, that I wouldn't mind meeting someone from the Department. A thing like that is quite enough to secure the regard of my chief."

On the appointed day, the saddle-horse and carriage arrived in front of the door together. Hector went down at once to examine his mount. He had had straps put on his trouser-legs and was flicking a crop he had bought the day before.

He raised each one of the horse's legs, patted its neck, its sides, its knees, opened its mouth, examined its teeth, told its age and delivered a practical lecture to his family on the equine in general and the one before him in particular, for he acknowledged that it was a fine specimen.

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After everyone had been installed in the carriage, he examined the saddle-straps and, placing his foot in the stirrup, swung himself into the saddle. As soon as the horse felt his weight, it began to prance and almost unseated its rider.

In some excitement, Hector tried to calm it by saying:

"Here now, beauty, here now."

Then, after the horse had quieted down, he turned to his wife and inquired:

"All ready?"

Everyone cried:

"Yes."

"Then, 'en route,'" he shouted.

And the procession moved off.

All eyes were on him. He rode in the English style and exaggerated the rebounds. Hardly did he touch the saddle, before he flew in the air like a ball. Every once in a while he would seem ready to fall and he kept staring straight ahead with a pale, anxious face.

His wife, who was holding one of the children on her lap and the maid, who had charge of the other one, kept saying over and over:

"Watch Papa, watch Papa!"

And the two youngsters, beside themselves with joy, gave vent to piercing shrieks. The horse, frightened by their clamors, started to gallop, and in the effort de Gribelin made to rein him in, he lost his hat. The coachman had to get down from his box to pick it up and when Hector took it from him, he turned to his wife and shouted:

"Do make the children stop screaming, my horse will run away."

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They picnicked on the grass, in the forest of Vésinet.

Although the coachman was supposed to take charge of the horses, Hector arose every little while to see that his mount lacked nothing. He patted it on the neck and fed it bread and sugar and cake.

Said he:

"He's a fine trotter. He shook me up a little at the start; but you saw how quickly he got over it; he recognized his master. He won't be unruly again."

They came back by the Champs-Elysées, as they had planned. The broad avenue was filled with carriages and the crowd was so dense on the sidewalks, that it looked like two long black ribbons running from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde. A shower of sunlight fell on the avenue and made the metal on the carriages and harnesses glitter.

A folly of movement, a wonderful agitation, seemed to have taken hold of the people, the horses and the carriages. And in the distance, in a glow of golden light, shone the Obélisque. Hector's horse, after he had passed the Arc de Triomphe, was suddenly seized with fresh ardor and flew past the carriages, bound for the stable, in spite of his rider's frantic efforts.

The family carriage was far behind now. Just as Hector reached the Palais de l'Industrie, the animal, seeing an open field before him, veered to the right and bolted home.

An old, gray-haired woman was slowly crossing the avenue; she was right in the horse's path. Powerless to check his mount, Hector began to shout at the top of his voice:

"Hey, there! Hey! Hey, there!"

She must have been deaf, for she quietly continued

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on her way until she was struck by the horse with the force of an engine and hurled ten feet away with her skirts in the air.

Some men cried:

"Arrest him!"

De Gribelin, crazed with fear, was clinging to the horse's mane and yelling:

"Help, help!"

A terrific jolt pitched him head foremost over the ears of his charger and landed him in the arms of a policeman.

In a second, he was surrounded by a furious, gesticulating mob. An old gentleman with a big round decoration and a white mustache, seemed especially exasperated. He kept saying:

"Upon my word, when a man is so awkward he ought to stay home. He shouldn't go out and kill people in the street, when he don't know how to handle a horse."

Presently four men, carrying the old woman, pushed their way through the crowd. She looked as if she were dead, with her blanched face and her bonnet covered with dust.

"Carry this woman into a drugstore," commanded the old gentleman, "and then we'll go to the police station."

Hector was placed between two officers; a third policeman led the horse and a great crowd followed behind.

All of a sudden, the family carriage hove in sight. Mme. de Gribelin jumped out, the maid lost her head and the children began to shriek. Hector explained that he had run down an old woman, but that he would

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be right home and implored his wife not to worry. The family was finally persuaded to depart amid great agitation.

At the police station, the explanations were short. Hector gave his name and occupation, and then everybody waited for news of the victim.

A policeman, sent out to investigate, returned with the report that the old woman had regained consciousness, but that she was injured internally. She was a Mme. Simon, sixty-five years old and a general houseworker.

When Hector learned that his victim was alive, he entertained hope and promised to pay any expenses she might incur. Then he hastened to the drugstore.

A crowd stood peering through the windows; the old woman was lying back in a chair with limp hands and a dazed expression on her face. Two physicians were bending over her. No limbs were broken, but they feared internal injuries.

Hector addressed her:

"Are you suffering a great deal?" he asked.

"Oh! yes."

"Where?"

"It feels like I had fire in my stomach."

One of the doctor's stepped forward:

"Are you the one responsible for the accident, monsieur?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, this woman ought to be sent to a hospital. I know of one where they would take her for six francs a day. Would you care to have me see about it?"

Hector was delighted, thanked the physician and went home much relieved.

He found his wife in tears. He quieted her:

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"It's nothing, and in a few days the old lady will be on her feet again; she is already better; I have sent her to a hospital. It's nothing! It's nothing!"

The next day, after office hours, he went to inquire after Mme. Simon. He found her sipping a broth with relish.

"Well?" said he.

"Oh! my good monsieur," she replied, "it's just the same; I'm no better. I feel like I were going to pass away."

The house physician said it would be well to wait a few days, as complications might set in.

Hector waited three days and then called again. The old woman, whose complexion and eyes were clear, began to moan as soon as she saw him:

"I can't move, my good m'sieu, I can't turn at all. I'll be laid up till the end of my days."

A shudder ran through Hector, as he listened. He asked to see the doctor. The latter shrugged his shoulders:

"I'm sure I can't say, monsieur, she yells as soon as we try to lift her. We cannot even move her rolling chair without having her scream unmercifully. I'm compelled to take her word; I'm not inside of her, you know. As long as I have not seen her walk, I have no right to suppose that she is lying."

The old woman listened, motionless, with sly eyes.

A week passed; then two and then four. Mme. Simon had not left her chair. She ate from morning until night and was growing fat. She talked brightly with the other patients and seemed perfectly used to her immobility, as if it were a well-earned rest after her fifty-odd years of toil as a general houseworker.

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Hector called every day; every day he found her serene and comfortable and saying:

"I just can't move, my good monsieur, I just can't."

Every evening, Mme. de Gribelin, devoured with anxiety, would inquire:

"And Mme. Simon?"

And each time he would reply with profound discouragement:

"Always the same."

They sent away the maid, whose wages were an expense they could no longer afford. They economized in everything; the entire gratuity was used up.

Then Hector called four doctors to give their opinion on the case. They examined the old woman, felt of her and tested her, the while she watched them with a sly expression.

"We must make her walk," said one of them.

She shrieked:

"I can't, my good messieurs, I can't!"

Then they took hold of her, drew her forcibly out of the chair and dragged her a few feet; but she slipped from their grasp and fell to the floor and screamed so terribly that they lifted her back again with the greatest care.

They emitted a discreet opinion, but concluded that work of any sort was out of the question.

And when Hector brought home the verdict, his wife let herself sink into a chair and stammered:

"It would be better to have her live here, it would cost less."

Hector leaped into the air:

"What! Here in our own home, you mean?"

After this outburst he remained dazed for a moment.

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His wife, with tears in her eyes and pitiful resignation, murmured:

"Well, mon ami, I can't help it, it was not my fault!"

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MY UNCLE JULES

A POOR old man with a white beard asked us for alms. My friend Joseph Davaranche gave him five francs; this rather surprised me. But he said:

"That wretched man brought to my mind a story the memory of which haunts me continually. I am going to relate it to you.

"My family, we are natives of Hâvre, was not rich, just having enough to get along on. Although my father worked unceasingly, he earned very little.

"My mother suffered a great deal from the privations that surrounded us and often made sharp remarks to my father. The poor man would then make a gesture that distracted me. He would pass his hand over his brow as if to remove a perspiration that did not exist. I felt his great sadness. Never would he reply. We economized in every possible way. We would never accept a dinner, for we were not able to return it. Our provisions were usually bought as bargains, whatever remained over on the stands. My sisters made their own dresses and would have long discussions about a piece of trimming that cost a few centimes per yard. Our daily fare consisted of a good soup and beef, which could be eaten with any kind of gravy. We were told that this was wholesome and strengthening, although personally, I would greatly have preferred a larger variety.

"But every Sunday we took a walk on the pier ar-

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rayed in our best clothes. My father, in frock coat, high hat and gloves gave his arm to my mother, who was adorned like a ship on a gala day. My sisters, always ready first, waited for the signal to start, but always, at the last moment, someone would invariably discover a spot on father's frock coat, which would have to be treated with a rag dipped in benzine. My father, with his hat on and in shirt sleeves, would patiently wait until the operation was finished, while my mother would hastily remove her gloves, fearing to spoil them. We departed with ceremony, my sisters going ahead arm in arm. They were marriageable and therefore my parents were anxious to call attention to them. I walked by my mother's left side and my father walked at her right.

"And I well remember the pompous air of my poor parents during those Sunday walks, the rigidity of their features and the severity of their glances. They advanced with a dignified tread, their bodies straight, their legs stiff, as though some important affair depended upon their movements, and every Sunday, when we saw the ships arrive from distant and unknown countries, my father always pronounced the same words: 'Ah! if Jules should be on board one of them, what a surprise it would be!'

"My uncle Jules, my father's brother, was the only hope of the family, after having been its 'bête noire.' I had known of him since my childhood, and I am sure I would have recognized him at sight, having heard him so often described. I knew all the details of his existence, from the day of his departure for America, notwithstanding the fact that one always spoke of that period

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of his life in a whisper. It appears that he misconducted himself, that is to say, he squandered some money, which is the greatest crime a member of a poor family can commit. Among the rich, a man who amuses himself 'fait des bêtises.' He is what one laughingly calls a 'noceur.' Among the needy, a boy who jeopardizes the family fortune becomes a good-for-nothing or a rascal. And that distinction is quite just, although the result is the same, for the consequences alone determine the gravity of the act. Well, Uncle Jules had perceptibly diminished the fortune my father had counted upon, after having dissipated every centime of his own portion.

"He was put on board a merchant vessel bound for New York (as one did in those days). After he arrived in America, my uncle Jules established himself as some kind of a merchant, what particular kind we never knew, and he soon wrote that he was making a little money, and hoped ere long to restore to my father a part of the fortune he had lost. That letter caused a profound emotion in the family. Jules, who only a short time before, was a good-for-nothing, suddenly became an honest man, a man with a heart, a real Davaranche, upright like all the Davaranches. A sea-captain also informed us that he had leased a large store and was carrying on an important business.

"A second letter, two years later said:

"'My dear Philippe: I am writing you so as you will not be anxious regarding my health, which is good. I leave to-morrow for a long trip to South America. It may be some years before you hear from me. If I do not write, do not be alarmed. I will return to Hâvre

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as soon as I have acquired a fortune. I hope that that may not be too long, and we will then live happily together.'

"That letter had become the gospel of the family. It was read on every occasion and shown to everybody. During ten years, in truth, uncle Jules gave no signs of life, but, as time passed, the hope my father possessed increased, and my mother also often said: 'When that good Jules returns, our position will change. There's a man who understood how to improve his affairs.'

"And every Sunday, when watching the large steamers creeping along the horizon, and vomiting toward the heavens their clouds of smoke, my father repeated his eternal phrase. 'Ah! If Jules should be on board of one, what a surprise!'

"And we really almost expected to see him wave a handkerchief and shout: 'Hello! Philippe.'

"We had planned a thousand things upon his assured return; one of which was to buy with uncle's money a little home in the country near d'Ingouville. I dare not affirm that my father had not already entered into negotiations with the proprietor. At that time, the elder of my sisters was twenty-eight years old, the other twenty-six. There were no prospects of their marrying, which was a great worry to us all. After some time, however, a suitor for my younger sister presented himself. A clerk, not rich, but honorable. I shall always be convinced that uncle Jules' letter, which was read one evening in his presence, put an end to his hesitations and determined him to propose.

"He was accepted with eagerness, and it was decided

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that, after the marriage, the entire family should together take a little trip to Jersey.

"Jersey is an ideal voyage for people with small means. It is not at a great distance; you cross the channel in a little steamboat and soon you are on strange soil, for that little island belongs to the English. Consequently, a Frenchman, after two hours of travel, can land among a people who are his close neighbors, and study their manners, which by the by, he probably will find deplorable.

"The trip to Jersey became our sole occupation, our dream of every moment. At last we started. I can see it all as though it happened yesterday, the steamer getting up steam and lying off the pier of Granville; my father, excited, watching the putting on board of our baggage; my mother, restless, leaning on my unmarried sister's arm; the latter appeared lost since the marriage of the other, like a chicken left alone in her nest. Behind us, the bride and groom, who always hung back and caused me often to turn my head in their direction.

"The whistle blew. Here we were on board, and the steamer, leaving the pier, glided upon a sea as smooth as a green marble table. We watched the coasts disappear, happy and proud, as are all those who travel but seldom. Before our departure, my father had had his frock coat cleaned once more of all its spots and now, at every moment, he spread the odor of benzine, which recalled to me our Sunday outings.

"All of a sudden, he saw two pretty women, to whom two men were offering oysters. An old sailor in rags opened the shells with a stroke of his knife, and passed

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them to the men, who gave them to the women. They ate them in a most delicate manner, holding the shells in their fine handkerchiefs, and advancing their lips so as not to soil their dresses. Then they would drink the juice with a little rapid movement and throw the shells into the sea. My father without doubt was delighted with the charming manner in which they ate the bivalves on a steamer in motion. He considered it good form, refined, elegant and approached my mother and sisters to ask them:

"'Would you like some oysters?'

"My mother hesitated, on account of the expense; but my sisters immediately accepted. My mother in a most displeased voice, said:

"'I am afraid of making myself ill. Only give a few to the girls, or they will be sea-sick.' Then, turning to me, she said: 'As for Joseph, he does not need any, one must not spoil a boy.'

"I remained by my mother's side, finding such a distinction most unjust. I gazed at my father, who was conducting my sisters and brother-in-law toward the old ragged sailor in a most pompous manner. The two women had left. My father showed my sisters how to handle the oysters without spilling the juice, and, to better demonstrate his meaning, he took one, but in trying to imitate the women, he immediately dropped the oyster, spilling all the liquid on his coat. I heard my mother murmur:

"'It would be better if he kept quiet.' But, all of a sudden, my father appeared anxious; he moved away a few feet, looked intently at his family gathered around the sailor, and then suddenly he approached us. He

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looked very pale, and his eyes were strange. He said in a subdued voice to my mother:

"'It is extraordinary how much that man who opens the oysters looks like Jules.'

"My mother, very much astonished, asked:

"'What Jules?'

"My father replied:

"'Why, my brother Jules. If I did not know he had a good position in America, I should say it was he.'

"My mother, extremely shocked, stammered:

"'You must be crazy! As long as you know it is not he, why talk such nonsense?'

"But my father insisted:

"'Go look at him, Clarisse. I prefer you to convince yourself with your own eyes.'

"She arose and went to join her daughters. I, too, looked at the man. He was old, dirty, all wrinkled, and did not once look up from his work.

"My mother came back. I saw that she trembled. She pronounced very fast:

"'I believe it is he. Go ask information from the captain. Above all things, be prudent, to avoid having that creature fall into our arms.'

"My father disappeared and I followed him, strangely moved.

"The captain, a tall, thin man, with long whiskers, was walking up and down the bridge with an important air as though he were commander of an Indian mail-steamer.

"My father approached him with ceremony and payed him some compliments regarding his profession.

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"'What was the population of Jersey? What were its products? Its customs? The nature of the soil?' etc., etc., etc. One would have thought that my father was talking of the United States of America. Then they spoke of the steamboat we were on, 'The Express,' then about the crew. At last my father, in a troubled voice, said: 'You have an old man there who opens oysters, and who appears most interesting. Do you know anything about him?'

"The captain, who during the conversation had become irritated, replied dryly:

"'He is an old French vagabond whom I found last year in America and whom I have brought back to his country. It appears he has relations in Hâvre, but he will not go near them, because he owes them money. His name is Jules — Jules Davaranches or Darvanche, something like that. At one time he was rich, but you see what he has come to now.'

"My father, who had become livid, articulated, his throat parched, his eyes haggard: 'Ah! ah! Well, well, that does not astonish me; thank you very much, captain,' and he walked away, while the seaman watched him with astonishment.

"He came back to my mother in such a condition that she said to him:

"'Sit down, we are going to learn something.'

"He threw himself on the seat and stammered: 'It is he, it is certainly he!' Then he asked, 'What are we going to do?'

"She quickly answered:

"'You must take away the girls, for, as Joseph knows all, he will want to tell them, and above all things, our son-in-law must know nothing of the affair.'

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"My father seemed stunned. He murmured: 'What a catastrophe!'

"My mother, having become furious, added: 'I always thought that that thief would never be anything and that he would be a burden to us! As though anything else could be expected of a Davaranche!' And my father passed his hand over his forehead, as he always did at my mother's reproaches.

"She said:

"'Give the money to Joseph to pay for the oysters. There is nothing left now but for that beggar to recognize us. That would create a pretty scene on the boat. Let us go to the other end and arrange it so that he will not see us.'

"She arose and after my father had given me five francs they moved away. My sisters, who seemed surprised, were waiting for father. I said: 'Mama had a slight attack of sea-sickness,' and then I turned to the oyster-opener: 'How much do we owe you, sir?'

"I had a desire to add: 'Uncle.'

"He answered:

"'Two francs.'

"'Here,' I said, without looking at him.

"I handed him the five francs and he gave me the change. Then I looked at his hand, wrinkled and thin, and at his miserable, sad face, and, broken-hearted, I said to myself: 'That is my uncle! My father's brother, my uncle!' I gave him a tip of half a franc, for which he thanked me, saying:

"'God bless you, young man!' with the air of a beggar who receives charity. I thought he must have begged in America.

"My sisters were contemplating me, bewildered at

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my generosity. When I returned the two francs to my father, my mother, surprised, asked:

"'It is not possible that you ate three francs worth of oysters?'

"In a firm voice I declared that I had given him half a franc as a 'pourboire.' My mother started and, looking me in the eyes, said: 'You are crazy! The idea of giving half a franc to that man, that rascal!'

"She stopped, for she had received a look from my father, which meant: 'Be careful, our son-in-law is near.' After that we were silent.

"Before us, on the horizon, a violet shadow appeared to arise from the sea. It was Jersey. As we approached the pier a violent desire seized my heart to see once more my uncle Jules, to be near him, to say something kind and comforting to him. But, as everybody had finished eating oysters, he had disappeared; without doubt he had descended into the hold of the boat, where the poor old wretch was lodged. On our return trip we took the boat to Saint-Malo to avoid meeting him. My mother was almost wild with fear. I never saw my uncle again.

"And now you know the reason why I sometimes give five francs to a beggar."

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THE walls of the cell were bare and white-washed. A narrow, barred window, placed high in the wall, so that it was of difficult access, lighted the small, gloomy room, and the lunatic, who was sitting on a wooden chair, eyed us steadfastly. He was very thin and had drawn, haggard features and white hair, hair that one felt had grown white in a few months. His clothes seemed to hang on his spare frame and sunken chest and stomach. One could feel that this miserable man was absorbed and ravaged by a thought, like a fruit by the all-conquering worm. His Folly, his Idea, was there, in his head, and it was obstinate, harassing, gnawing. Little by little, It, the Invisible, Impalpable, Immaterial Idea was eating into his flesh, drying up his blood, snuffing out his very life.

What a mystery was this man, whom a Dream was sending to his grave! This Possessed One inspired terror and pity and infinite compassion! What weird dream, fatal and horrible, lived under that brow lined by deep, moving furrows?

Said the physician: "He has terrible furious spells; he's one of the strangest lunatics that has ever come under my observation. He is afflicted with erotic and morbid mania. He's a sort of necrophile. He has written a diary which clearly shows the malady of his mind. His folly becomes almost palpable, so to speak. If you care to, you may look over this strange document."

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I followed the doctor into his office and he handed me the diary of the poor, demented wretch.

"Read it," said he, "and then tell me what you think of it."

Here is what was written in the diary:

Until the age of thirty-four I lived quietly, without one love affair. Life seemed very good to me, very simple and very easy. I was wealthy. I liked so many things that I had a passion for none. How good it is to live! Every morning I woke up happy and did the things I liked to do. And I went to bed satisfied, with the hope of the next day and the peaceful future to look forward to.

I had had several mistresses without ever having felt the frenzy of desire, or the ardent love that sometimes comes after possession. It is good to live that way. It is perhaps better to love, but then, love is frightful. And yet, those who love in a commonplace way, must experience great happiness, but not such happiness as mine, for love came to me in the strangest manner.

As I was wealthy, I indulged my taste for antiquities of all sorts; and I often thought of the unknown hands that had touched these things, of the eyes that had admired them, of the hearts that had loved them, for one certainly loves inanimate objects! I often remained hours and hours looking at a little watch of the past century. It was so dainty and pretty, with its enamel and its wrought gold! And it ticked as it did on the day when a woman, captivated by the precious jewel, went into the shop and bought it. This little watch had not stopped going, had never ceased its me-

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chanical life nor the tic-tac begun a hundred years ago. Who was the first to wear it under her kerchief, the heart of the watch beating against the heart of the woman? What hand had held it lightly clasped in its tapering fingers, had turned it over and over and wiped the porcelain shepherds tarnished by the moisture of the skin? Whose eyes had scanned its flowered face for the expected, beloved and divine hour?

How I should have liked to have known her, the woman who had owned that rare and exquisite jewel! She is dead! I am possessed by the desire of the women of the past. I love, through the ages, all those who have loved.

The stories of past loves fill me with regret! Oh! beauty, youth, hope and smiles! Should not these be eternal?

How I have wept for whole nights over the poor women of yesterday, so beautiful, so tender, so sweet, whose arms opened to their lovers and who now are dead! Kisses are immortal! They hover from lip to lip, from century to century, from age to age! Mankind gathers them, transmits them and dies.

The past attracts me, the present awes me because the future means death. I regret all things of the past and I weep over all the people who have lived; I would like to stay the hand of Time. But the hours flit by, constantly stealing a little from my lifetime and giving me over to the annihilation of to-morrow. And I will never live again.

But I am not to be pitied. For I found The One I was looking for; and, through her, I tasted heavenly delights.

One bright morning I was loafing around Paris,

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happy and light-hearted, looking into all the shop-windows. All of a sudden I noticed a beautiful Italian cabinet of the seventeenth century. It was a rare and beautiful piece of workmanship. I attributed it to a Venetian artist by the name of Vitelli, who was quite celebrated in his time.

I passed on.

Why did the recollection of that cabinet haunt me with such insistence that it made me retrace my steps? I stopped once more in front of the curiosity-shop and felt the temptation to purchase the cabinet.

What a strange thing temptation is! You look at a thing and, little by little, it seduces you, troubles you, takes possession of you as would a woman's face.

Its charm envelopes you, a weird charm, which proceeds from its color, its shape and its own particular physiognomy; and you already love it, desire it, yearn for it. The fever of possession is upon you, weak at first, as if it were timid, but stronger and stronger as time goes on, until it becomes a raging passion.

And the dealers seem to read in your eyes the secret and irresistible longing that is in you.

I bought the cabinet and had it sent home immediately. I had it placed in my bedroom.

Oh! I pity all those who do not know the honeymoon that a collecton spends with the antiquity he has purchased. He caresses it with hand and eye as if it were of flesh; he hovers around it continually and never stops thinking of it. Its cherished remembrance follows him about, in the streets, in society, everywhere; and when he comes home, he runs and looks at it before taking off his hat.

Really, for a week I adored that cabinet. I opened

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its drawers and its doors, handled it with delight and tasted all the joys of possession.

One night, while I was feeling a panel, I discovered that there was some secret device about the cabinet. My heart began to beat and I spent the whole night trying to solve the mystery.

I succeeded the following day, when I inserted the blade of a knife in a crack of the wood. A board slid back and I saw, lying on black velvet, a marvelous braid of golden hair.

Yes, a big braid of golden hair, almost Titian-colored, that was tied with a gold cord.

I was bewildered and I trembled from head to foot! An almost imperceptible perfume, so old that it seemed the ghost of itself, emanated from the drawer and the weird relic.

I lifted it gently, almost religiously, from its resting-place. It unrolled and touched the floor; it was so thick and brilliant, so light and serpentine, that it looked like the flaming tail of a comet.

A strange emotion clutched my throat. What was this find? When and how had this braid been hidden in that drawer? What adventure or drama was behind this discovery?

Who had cut this hair? Had it been a lover, when parting forever from his mistress? Or a husband animated by a spirit of revenge? Or had it been the fair owner herself, in a fit of despair?

Was she about to enter a convent when she had thrust that treasure into the drawer, to be a sort of token to the living world? Was she, young and fair, to be nailed in her coffin and had her lover kept that glorious adornment, the only thing about her that was

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not destined to perish in the earth, the only thing he might worship and caress in his hours of despair?

Was it not strange that this golden hair was untarnished, when not a bit of the body from whence it had sprung, remained?

It ran through my fingers, caressed my skin with the gentle touch of a dead person. I felt so troubled that I almost wept. I held the braid a long, long time in my hand and it seemed to me as if something of its owner's soul had remained within its meshes. Then I laid it away carefully on the worn velvet, closed the drawer and went out to take a long walk and be alone with my dreams.

I walked a long time, filled with emotion and sadness, the same emotion one feels after a love kiss. It seemed to me as if I had lived before, as if I had known the owner of the golden hair.

When I got home, an irresistible longing came over me to look at the braid. I took it out of the drawer and instantly a long shudder ran through my frame.

For a few days I remained in my usual state of mind, although the thought of the golden braid never left me. Whenever I was home I had to look at it and touch it. I would unlock the drawer with the same emotion I would have felt had it been the door of my beloved's chamber. In my heart and in my hands was a continual, peculiar, sensual yearning to feel the golden flood of this dead hair on my skin. Then, after I had satisfied my longing and had closed the drawer again, I still felt its presence, as if it had been a living, breathing thing imprisoned in the cabinet; I felt its presence and desired it anew; I felt anew the longing

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to take it out, to touch it and animate myself through its delightful, cool, silky contact.

A month or two, I don't remember exactly, went by. The braid haunted me; I was happy and tormented at the same time, as if I were expecting the fulfillment of my desires.

I used to lock myself in my room to be alone with it, to feel it on my skin, to bite it, kiss it, roll my face in it. I drowned my lips in it and my eyes, so that the light of day would come to me through its golden mazes.

I loved it, yes, I loved it. I could not live without it, could not remain away from it an hour.

And I waited . . . waited for what? I did not know. For *Her*. One night I awoke with the sensation that somebody was in my room.

Of course, I was alone. But I could not go to sleep again and as I tossed about without finding rest, I got up to look at the braid. It seemed softer to me, more animated than usual. Do the dead return? The kisses I rained upon it almost made me faint with ecstasy and I carried it to bed with me and glued my lips to it as to a beloved mistress.

The dead come back. For *She* came to me. Yes, I saw her, held her, possessed her as she was in this life, tall, blonde, plump, with cool breasts and lyre-shaped hips, and my kisses traveled from her throat to her little feet, following all the divine curves of her body.

Yes, I possessed her every day, every night. She came to me every night, the Beautiful, Adorable, Mysterious, Unknown One.

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My happiness was so great that I was unable to conceal it. When I was with her I felt a superhuman bliss, a strange joy at being able to possess the Invisible, the Immaterial, Death Itself, so to speak. No lover ever tasted such ardent, terrible delights!

I was unable to conceal my bliss. I loved her so that I would not go anywhere without her and I took her everywhere with me.

I showed her around town as my wife, I took her to the theaters in private boxes as my mistress.

But they saw her . . . they guessed my secret . . . they tore her from me . . . and they threw me into prison like a malefactor. They took her away from me . . . Oh! misery! . . .

Here the manuscript ended. And just as I looked at the physician with bewildered eyes, a frightful cry, a howl of helpless rage and exasperated desire rang through the asylum.

"Listen to him," said the physician. "We have to give that obscene lunatic a shower bath five times a day. Other men besides Sergeant Bertrand have loved dead women."

Filled with pity, horror and astonishment, I stammered:

"But . . . the braid . . . did it really exist?"

The doctor rose, opened a closet filled with bottles and instruments, and grabbing a braid of blonde hair, flung it across the room to me. It flew into my lap like a golden bird.

I shuddered as I felt its soft, caressing touch on my

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hands. And my heart throbbed with disgust and covetousness; with disgust, as when one comes in contact with the accessories of a crime, with covetousness as when one experiences the temptation of something both mysterious and degrading.

The physician shrugged his shoulders and remarked:

"Really, the mind of man is capable of anything!"

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NO! mon ami, it cannot be. That which you ask of me is revolting and disgusting. They say that God, (you know that I believe in God,) has spoiled all the good that he has created by joining something horrible with it. He has given us the power of loving, the sweetest joy we have in this world, but He thinks that sentiment is too pure, and too beautiful for us, so he has created the senses — the ignoble senses, which are coarse, revolting and brutal. He has created them as if in derision, contaminating them with all the filth of the body. He has conceived the idea in such a manner that we cannot think of it without a blush of shame, neither can we speak of it, except with lowered voice. The atrocious act is enveloped in shame. It hides itself, it revolts the soul, it wounds the sight, it shames the morals, and is pursued by the law. Never again speak of it to me, never!

I do not know if I still love you, but I know that I am happy when I am near you, and when I see the tender look in your eyes, and hear the beloved tones of your voice, but if, through weakness on my part, you obtained what you desire, from that day you would become odious to me. The delicate chains of friendship which hold us together would be broken. There would be between us an abyss of crime. Let us remain as we are. And . . . love me if you will, I will permit it. Your friend,

GENEVIEVE.

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MADAME:

Will you allow me in turn to speak to you as frankly as you have to me, without polite phrasing. I will speak just as plainly and unreservedly as I would to a friend who takes his eternal vows.

I also do not know if I love you. I could not really know until after that which revolts you so much has happened.

Have you forgotten the lines by Musset:

Je me souviens encor de ces spasmes terribles,
De ces baisers muets, de ces muscles ardents,
De cet être absorbé, blême et serrant les dents.
S'ils ne sont pas divins, ces moments sont horribles.

This sensation of horror and insuperable disgust, we also experience when we are carried away by the heat of passion, and we let ourselves be mated at hazard. But when a woman is for us the being of our choice, a creature of continued charm, of infinite seduction as you are for me, the caress then becomes the most fervent, the most perfect, the most infinite happiness.

The caress, madame, is the test of love. When our passion diminishes after the embrace, we have deceived ourselves, but when it increases, *then* we know that we love.

A philosopher, who does not practice these doctrines, has put us on our guard against the snare of nature.

"Nature craves beings," he says, "and to impel us to create them, she has mingled the double enticement of love and voluptuousness in the snare." "And," he adds, "from the moment we give ourselves up to our passions, as soon as the sweet madness of the em-

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brace has passed, a profound sadness falls upon us, we see, we feel and we know the veiled and secret reason which has impelled us in spite of ourselves."

This is often true,— very often indeed, and it is then that we experience the feeling of disgust. Nature has vanquished our passions, she has thrown us at her will into the arms that opened to receive us, because she decreed that arms should open.

Yes! I know the cold and violent kisses on strange lips, the fixed and ardent look in eyes that one has never seen before, and will never see again, and all that which I cannot here say, all which leaves in the soul a bitter, bitter melancholy. But when this cloud of affection that we call love has enveloped two beings, when they have thought of each other constantly, for a long time, when during an absence they are forever in the mind, by day and by night, and the sweet souvenir brings to the soul the features of the beloved face, the smile, and the sound of the voice, when in thought they have possessed the absent one, is it not natural then that at least we open our arms to each other, that our lips meet and that our bodies blend.

Have you never had the desire to be kissed? Tell me, if lips do not call to other lips, and if a look cannot excite furious and unrestrainable passions. Assuredly, *there* is the snare, the impure snare, you will say. What does that matter? I know it, I love it, and I will fall into the snare. Nature teaches us to caress, but hides her ruse, which is to force us in spite of ourselves to perpetuate the generations. Well then, let us steal caresses from her, make them our own, refine them, change them, idealize them, if you wish; nature deceives us, so let us deceive the treacherous one in

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our turn. Let us do more than she would have us do, more than she would dare to teach us. Let the caress be like a precious metal, brought out roughly from the earth, we will take it, and work at it, until it is wrought to perfection, without giving thought to the original design, or of the concealed caprices of him whom you call God. And if our thoughts can poetize all things, let us poetize the caress, madame, even to its most terrible brutalities, its most ingenious contrivances, and its most prodigious devices. Madame, let us love the delicious caress like the strong wine which intoxicates, like the ripe fruit which sweetens the mouth, like all happiness which penetrates the body. Let us love flesh, because flesh is beautiful, because it is white, and firm, and smooth, and soft, and exquisite to the lips and hands. When our artists sought for the rarest, and the purest form for the quaffing bowl — wherein Art could drink to inebreity, what did they choose? They chose a woman's rounded bosom of which the flower resembles that of the rose. I once read in an erudite book, entitled the Dictionary of Medical Science this definition of the bosoms, which, they say, was originated by Joseph Prudhomme, who is now a doctor of medicine: "A woman's breasts can be considered as an object that is created for a twofold purpose, that of utility and that of pleasure." If you wish we will pass by that of utility, and speak only of the charm. Would it have its exquisite form, whose call for a caress is irresistible, if it were only destined to give nourishment to the little ones?

Madame, let us leave it to the moralists to preach modesty to us, and let the doctors give us prudent advice, let the poets — the deceivers who deceive them-

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selves — sing of the chaste union of souls and of incorporeal happiness; let us leave the homely women to their duties, and the rational men to their useless work, the lay brethren to their doctrines, the priests to their commandments, but *we* will love above all else the caress which intoxicates, maddens, enervates, exhausts and revives, which is sweeter than perfume, lighter than the breeze, more acute than wounds, quick and devouring, which forces a prayer, a cry, a tear, a sigh, and which can impel us to commit any crime, or any act of courage. Let us adore it, not in a tranquil, normal, or legal manner, but violently, furiously, immoderately. Let us search for it as we search for gold and diamonds, for it is of greater value, being inestimable and transient. Pursue it without ceasing, die for it and by it. And if you wish, madame, I will tell you a truth which you will not find, I believe, in any book,— the only happy women on earth are those who are loved with this intensity, who do not *want* for caresses. They live without care, without torturing thoughts, with only one desire,— the desire for the next kiss which will be as sweet and as satisfying as the last. The others — those to whom the caress is circumspect, incomplete or rare, their lives are tormented by a thousand restless, disquieting thoughts, by the love of gold, the love of self-conceit, by all the events which in time become griefs. But women who are caressed to satiety have need of nothing, desire nothing, regret nothing. They live in a tranquil and happy dream, scarcely aware of what would be to others, irreparable disasters, for the caress replaces all, cures all, consoles all.

I have still so much more to tell you.

HENRI.

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These two letters written on Japanese paper of rice straw, were found in a little Russian leather pocketbook, under a praying desk in the Madeleine Church on Sunday morning after the one o'clock mass, by

MAUFRIGNEUSE.

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FEAR

IN the darkness of the night the train rushed onward at express speed. The compartment in which I was seated was stuffy, the cushions reeked with the strong odor of phenol disinfectant. Undoubtedly this train of the P. L. M. had come from Marseilles. Seated opposite to me was an old gentleman who was gazing out of the window; we were the only occupants of the car. The night was suffocating, moonless, without a breath of air, and not a star was visible. The steam from the plunging engine came to us through the open window, and threw into our faces a warm, sluggish breath — oppressive and stifling. We had started from Paris three hours ago and were *en route* for the center of France, but so far, we had seen nothing of the country we had traversed. We were sitting silently by the window when suddenly there appeared before our eyes a fantastic apparition; before a great fire in a wood two men were standing. We saw them for a moment only — two miserable outcasts in tattered garments, crimson in the gleaming light reflected from the roaring fire, their dark, bearded faces turned towards us, and round and about them, like the setting of a drama, the green trees — glimmering with rugged trunks lit up by the fiery reflex of the flames, the verdant foliage, traversed, imbued, and steeped, by the light which crept through it.

We passed, and all became black again. It was a strange, weird vision. What were these two wretches

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doing in the forest? Why had they lit a tremendous fire on a sultry, suffocating night?

My traveling companion pulled out his watch and turning to me, remarked: "Sir, it is just midnight. That is a singular thing we have just seen."

I fully agreed with him, and we discussed the subject, trying to solve the mystery. Who could these men be, were they criminals who had waited till midnight to burn the proof of their crime? Were they wizards preparing a philter? It was not likely that anyone would light such a fire in the middle of the night — a sultry summer night — to boil soup. What were they doing then? We could not imagine, it would forever remain a mystery to us.

My companion then began to talk, but I could not glean from his conversation what his profession was. He was an old man, decidedly original, intelligent, and well educated, but he seemed to me to be slightly demented. However, why should I say that, for how can we distinguish between the sane and the insane in this world, where madness is often called genius, and reason is called folly?

"I am glad that I saw that," he remarked, "for I felt for a few minutes a weird sensation. Do you not think that it must have been very exciting in the olden times when all was so mysterious? In proportion, as we lift the veil from the unknown, so do we take from the imagination of man. Tell me, do you not think that the nights are empty and the blackness of night is ordinary and vulgar now that we no longer have apparitions? We have no more strange beliefs, we do not believe in the fantastical. Why? Because all that was inexplicable is now explicable. The supernatural ebbs

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away like a lake that is drained by a canal; does not science from day to day extend the limits of the marvelous? I must tell you, Sir, that I belong to an old race, who liked to hold to certain beliefs — a simple race who did not seek to fathom the mysteries of life; they did not comprehend, neither did they wish to comprehend. They would have refused the simple and plain truth. Yes! We have taken away from the imagination of man in suppressing the invisible. The world to-day seems to me like an abandoned sphere — empty and bare; the beliefs which rendered it poetical have all vanished. When I go out at night I wish I could shudder with the fright that makes old women cross themselves as they walk quickly by the cemetery, and run away and hide when queer vapors arise from the swamps, and when they see the fantastic will-o'-the-wisp. I wish I could believe in that *something* so vague and terrifying, which they imagine passes close to them at dusk. In olden times, the obscurity of the night was sombre and menacing, fabulous beings, prowlers and evil-doers groped about in the dark, their forms could not be distinguished, but the fear of them froze the marrow in the bones, their occult power passed the limits of our thoughts. With the vanishing of the belief in the supernatural, actual terror has also disappeared, for really we experience only real terror for things which we do not understand. Visible dangers can agitate, trouble, and alarm us, but is that fear compared with the convulsions conveyed to the soul by the certainty that we shall meet a ghost, that we see it gliding towards us, and that we shall soon be locked in the deadly embrace of a wandering phantom? The shades of nights do not seem to me to be dark

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now that they are no longer haunted. Here is a proof of what I say — if we suddenly found ourselves alone in the woods, we should be pursued by the image of the two strange beings who appeared before us in the blood red light of their fire, far more than by a fear of some known or real danger." He repeated, "We experience real terror only for the things which we do not understand."

A story that Tourgueneff related to a party of us one Sunday when we were at Gustave Flaubert's home, came to my mind as my companion finished speaking. I do not know if the celebrated Russian author has ever written about it. No one knew how to make the fear of the veiled unknown pass through the soul better than Tourgueneff. In the half light of a strange story, he would give us a glimpse into a world of alarming, uncertain, and menacing things; he would make us feel strongly that vague fear of the Invisible, that fear of the Unknown that is at the back of us — behind the door, behind the walls, back of the apparent life. He would suddenly traverse our spirits with dubious lights which lit up only enough to increase our fear. He would show us the significance of strange coincidences, the unexpected unison of circumstances as though by accident, but that was guided by a hidden and cunning power. He would make us feel as though an imperceptible chain was pulling us across the abyss of life, as though we were in a cloudy dream, the meaning of which unceasingly escaped us. He did not enter boldly into the realms of the supernatural like Edgar Allan Poe or Hoffman, he related simple tales in which vague and weird things crept through. I remember on that particular Sunday of which I speak

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he also made the same remark as my traveling companion, that "we experience real terror only for the things which we do not understand."

He was seated in a capacious lounging chair, his arms hanging down by his side, his legs stretched out limply before him. His head was covered with thick locks of silvery hair, and his long white beard gave him the aspect of a patriarch or of a River of Ovid. He spoke slowly, with a certain indolence which gave an added charm to his phrases, and there was a certain quaver in his deep voice which accentuated the meaning of his words. His eyes were bright and wide open, and, like the eyes of a child, they reflected the emotions of his thoughts. He related the following adventure to us:

One day in his early youth he was out shooting in a forest in Russia. The whole day long he had walked about the woods, and towards the end of the afternoon he threw himself down on the banks of a river, thoroughly exhausted. With masses of floating weeds the river glided calmly on under the trees — clear, cool and deep. An intense desire to throw himself into the transparent water seized him; in a moment he had thrown off his clothes and leaped into the stream. He was a tall and very strong youth, a vigorous and hardy swimmer. For some time he gently drifted on, touching lightly the floating weeds. All was peaceful and calm. He liked to feel the gentle contact of the rushes against his flesh. Suddenly a hand was placed on his shoulder, he turned with a start, and faced a hideous creature, who gazed at him with eager intentness. It bore partly the resemblance to a woman and partly to a gorilla.

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She had an enormous face, wrinkled and puckered, and as she looked at him, she grinned and made grimaces all the time. Two nameless things, which were meant for her breasts floated before her. The hair which surrounded her face and floated on her back, was inordinately long, and tangled, and scorched by the sun. Tourgueneff was seized with a ghastly terror, the icy fear of the supernatural; without reflecting, without settled purpose or understanding, he began to swim desperately towards the shore, but the monster swam after him and came up quickly beside him; she stretched her hand and touched his neck, his back, his legs; at each touch she gave a little gurgle of delight. The youth swam on frantically until he reached the shore, then he darted up the steep bank of the river and rushed headlong through the dense wood, without stopping to pick up his clothes and his gun. The hideous creature followed him, and caught up to him; she ran along by his side, keeping up the same speed and grunting all the time. The fugitive at last exhausted and paralyzed from terror, slackened his pace, and was going to fall down, when a little boy who was minding some goats ran quickly towards them, armed with a horsewhip. The child commenced to lash the creature without mercy until she turned and fled, uttering loud cries of pain. Tourgueneff watched her disappear in the dense foliage of the wood, with the mincing step and spring of the gorilla.

The little goat-herd then told the frightened youth that she was a poor mad woman who had lived in the woods for thirty years. The peasants gave her what little they could spare; the greater part of her time she spent swimming in the river. When the great

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writer concluded his story he told us that nothing in his life had ever terrified him so much, because he did not *understand* what the monster was.

My companion had listened attentively. "It is true," he said, "one has only absolute terror for that which one does not understand. We can really experience the awful convulsions of the soul which we call terror, only when there is mingled with the fright a superstitious fear. I once felt this terror in all its horror. It was for something that was so simple and stupid that I scarcely like to tell you about it:

"I was on a walking tour in Brittany. I was alone. I had traversed Finistère and tramped miles through lonely parts, across uncultivated soil where only the wild furze grew, beside the huge sacred stones, which the peasants believed were haunted. The day preceding I had explored the sinister Pointe du Raz, that bit of the old world where the two seas — the Atlantic and the Channel combat for eternity. My mind was full of legends, of stories that I had read or had heard on the subject of beliefs and superstitions. I was on my way from Penmarch to Pont-l'Abbé at night. Do you know Penmarch? No! Well, the seashore is flat, quite flat, and low: it almost seems as though it were lower than the sea. On all sides is the broad expanse of the ocean, grayish and menacing; you can see huge slimy rocks which seem to have the form of wild beasts.

"I had dined in a little wineshop that was frequented by fishermen; as soon as I had finished my meal I started on my journey, taking the right of the road which lay between two high lands. The night was very dark. As I passed the druidical stones, which looked like

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phantoms lowering above me, it seemed as though they turned to look at me, and little by little a vague, unreasonable fear possessed me. Fear of what! I could not tell, it was a nameless fear that was creeping slowly upon me. There are nights when one can almost feel the light touch of spirits, when the soul is chilled without reason, and the heart beats quickly under a confused uneasiness.

"The road was long — interminably long and empty. Except for the roaring of the sea which lay behind me, there was not a sound; sometimes the dreary and menacing noise seemed to be so near that I thought the water must be upon me, and I was seized with a desire to fly, to run from it at full speed. A low wind began to blow in squalls, it made the wild furze shake and softly hiss around me. I thought I would quicken my step for I was cold — deadly cold, a mortal chill of terror penetrated my body. Ah! If I could have met some human being! It was now so dark, that it was difficult for me to see the road before me. Suddenly I heard in the distance which stretched beyond, a rumbling noise. A carriage, I thought. I listened for a moment, but the noise had ceased, I could hear nothing but the sound of the waves. A minute passed and I heard again a rolling noise, but much nearer. I could not see any lights coming towards me, this struck me as being very strange. How could any one drive through this desolate and wild country without lanterns? I listened again, all was silent, the rolling had stopped, and then it came on again. It could not be a cart or a heavy vehicle, the noise was too light, and how was it I could not hear the horses' hoofs? I began to wonder at that. What could it be? it came

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towards me quickly, with increasing speed, but still I could hear only the rolling, no sound of hoofs or of feet — nothing. What could it be? it was quite near to me now, it was almost upon me. With a feeling of instinctive fear I leaped aside into the ditch and then there passed before my startled eyes a large wheel-barrow — *alone*. There was no one pushing it. It went on and on, at a great rate along the dark road. My heart beat so violently that I sank down among the weeds and listened to the rumbling as it died away in the distance, it was going on towards the sea. I could not move, I could not walk, for I knew that if it had returned and followed me I should have died of terror.

"It was a long time before I gained sufficient courage to continue my journey; I walked along the rest of the road with such fear at my heart, that the slightest sound made me shake and hold my breath. You will say it was foolish, but I was *afraid*.

"In thinking it over later, when I had fully regained my composure, I solved the mystery. Without the slightest doubt a bare-footed small child was guiding it, and I was looking for the head of a man at an ordinary height. In a measure you can understand what I felt. My mind had been dwelling on things supernatural, and along comes a barrow which was rolling onward with no visible hand to guide it. '*Quelle horreur!*"

He remained in deep thought for a few minutes then he continued:

"I tell you, Sir. There is a terrible and menacing danger near us at this very moment. This invasion of the cholera, the odor of phenol with which these cars

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are infected, cries out that the germs are here among us — somewhere.

"If we were to see Toulon now, we should know well that *It* — the Terror was stalking about in the midst of the people. It is not the fear of an illness which has made them crazy. The cholera is another thing, it is the Invisible, it is a plague of by-gone ages, a species of Evil Spirit which returns to us, and which fills us with wonder as much as with fear — it *belongs* to the past. I laugh at doctors when they talk of their microbes. It is not an insect that would inspire a man with such terror, that he would leap from his window and be dashed into pieces below. It is the cholera, the indescribable and ghastly Being who comes to us from the far East. If you go through Toulon, you will see the people dancing in the streets. Why do they dance when Death is in their midst? In the suburbs of the town you will see them lighting bonfires, and sending off fireworks, while bands of musicians play joyous airs in the public parks and promenades. Why this frenzied madness? It is because It is there, they are defying It, not the Microbe, but the Cholera. They put it at defiance and bluster and swagger as they would at an enemy who lies in ambush: it is for It that they dance and laugh and shriek, that they light the bonfires, and play the gayest music, it is for the Fiend who kills, and whom we feel is present everywhere, invisible, menacing like the Evil Beings who were charmed away by the ancient barbarous priests . . ."

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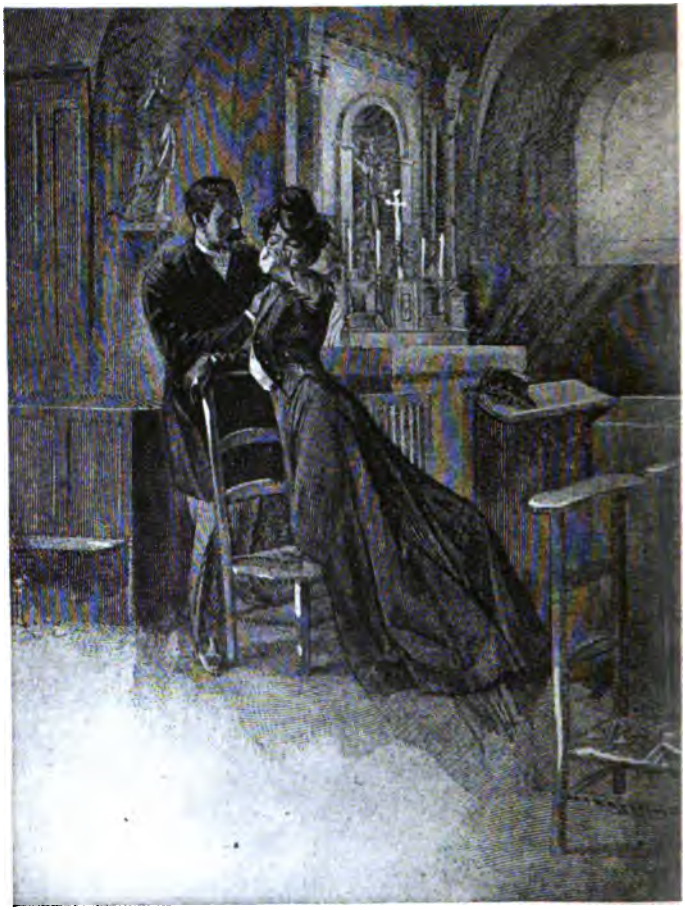

"Now I understand everything," she sobbed.

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NOTRE COEUR

(OUR HEARTS)

PART FIRST

I

ONE day, Massival, the composer, and celebrated author of *Rebecca,* who for some fifteen years had been designated only as "the young and illustrious master," said to his friend André Mariolle:

"Please let me know why you have never cared to be introduced to Mme. Michèle de Burne. I tell you that she is one of the most interesting women in Paris to-day."

"Simply because," replied Mariolle, "I do not feel as if I had been born to mingle with her set."

"My dear fellow, you are entirely mistaken. Her salon is original, amusing and artistic. She has good music, and her art of conversation has reached the perfection it attained in the best salons of the past century. You would be gladly welcomed because you play the violin splendidly, are well-thought of by her friends and have the reputation of being somewhat out of the ordinary."

Flattered, but still resisting, knowing quite well, besides, that this move of his friend had been inspired by

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the young woman herself, Mariolle gave vent to a "Phew! I don't care much about it," in which affected contempt and ready consent were mingled.

Massival continued:

"Will you go to see her some day with me? You already know her a little through us. She is a very pretty woman of eight and twenty, clever, who does not want to marry, as she was most unfortunate in her first matrimonial experience. Her home is a rendezvous for interesting people, where you will not meet many club men or men about town, just a sprinkling for the general effect, and she will be delighted to have me present you."

Mariolle was won over.

"Very well," he replied, "I'll go with you some day."

At the beginning of the following week, the composer dropped in and inquired:

"Have you any engagement for to-morrow evening?"

"Why, no," said Mariolle.

"Then I will take you to dine at Mme. de Burne's. She asked me to invite you and gave me a note."

After deliberating a moment, merely for the sake of form, Mariolle exclaimed:

"All right, I'll go."

André Mariolle was about thirty-seven years old, a bachelor, and had sufficient means to live in his own way, to travel and to even possess a presentable collection of modern paintings and antiquities. He was thought clever but odd, capricious, contemptuous and retiring, the latter more from pride than from actual timidity. He was gifted and very discriminating, quite

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capable of understanding everything and of accomplishing a number of things, but he was also idle. He was satisfied to enjoy life from a spectator's or better still, from an amateur's standpoint. Had he been poor, he no doubt would have become a remarkable, even a famous, man; but he was blessed with an income, and therefore constantly felt the need of reproaching himself for being of no account in the world. He had, it is true, dabbled a little in Art; once, essaying literature, he had published some clever notes of travel, full of life and interest; then he took up music, and attained with the violin a skill which earned him the commendation of professionals; and, lastly, he had exhibited a taste for sculpture, that art in which a little talent and the gift of fashioning bold forms, deceive the ignorant into a belief of real knowledge and training. His clay statuette, "A Tunisian Masseur," had won much approval at the Salon the year before.

A remarkable horseman, he was also a good fencer, although he never used the foils in public, for the same reason, no doubt, that he shunned society where serious rivalries might also be encountered.

His friends, however, were unanimous in praising and appreciating him, probably because he gave them little cause for envy. They spoke of him as a loyal, devoted friend with agreeable manners and a most attractive personality.

He was rather tall, and his black beard, worn close at the sides, ended in a smart point; his hair, which was slightly tinged with gray, crisped and waved around his temples, while his eyes were brown, very alert and keen, with sometimes a suspicion of sternness in their depths.

Among his intimate friends were many artists, Gaston

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de Lamarthe, the novelist, the composer Massival, and the painters Jobin, Rivolet and de Maudol. They seemed to value his intellect, his friendship and even his judgment, though in their hearts, the vanity that goes hand in hand with success, made them look upon him as a very clever and attractive failure.

His haughty demeanor seemed to imply: "I am nothing, because I do not wish to be anything."

So he lived among a restricted circle of friends, disdaining any fashionable flirtation or large salon in which others might outshine him and relegate him to the ranks of the social figureheads. He associated only with people who appreciated his somewhat serious and hidden qualities, and if he had so spontaneously consented to be presented to Mme. de Burne, it was because his best friends, those who were forever extolling his merits, were also the friends of the young widow.

She lived in a pretty apartment in the rue du General Foy, back of Saint-Augustin. Two of the rooms faced the street, the dining-room, and a drawing-room, used as a reception-room; two other rooms looked out upon a fine garden which belonged to the landlord of the apartment house. First came a spacious drawing-room with three bay windows opening on the garden; it was furnished with exquisite and costly things, that revealed a taste excessively simple but pure. The armchairs, the tables, the dainty étagéres, the pictures, the fans and bisque statuettes in a glass closet, the vases, the large paneled clock, everything attracted and held the eye either by its shape, its costliness or its antiquity. In order to have this home, of which she was almost as proud as she was of herself, she had drawn upon the knowledge, the friendship and the experience of all the

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artists she knew. She was wealthy and could afford to pay well, and they collected for her things which possessed an originality that escaped the observation of the vulgar amateur. She had treated with their help a house beautiful, into which an "entrée" was not easy to gain. She thought that people enjoyed calling on her more than they did on other women. It was really one of her pet theories to pretend that the shade of materials and draperies, the beauty of color and line attracted and held the caller as much as bright smiles. "Apartments have a character of their own, attractive or repulsive," she was wont to say, "and whether plain or sumptuous, they captivate or repel, the same as their tenants. They stimulate or deaden the pulse, warm or chill the spirit, make one feel cheerful or depressed, and impart to each visitor an unreasoned desire to remain or to depart."

In the middle of the gallery, a grand-piano occupied a place of honor between the two enormous jardinières. A large, two-paneled door led into the bedroom which, in turn, opened on a spacious boudoir hung in light colored chintz where Mme. de Burne, when alone, spent most of her time.

She had married a well-bred ruffian, one of those domestic tyrants who exact blind submission from their wives, and she had been very unhappy. For five years, she submitted silently to the abuse, exactions and harshness of her insufferable master. Bewildered and terrified by this revelation of married life, which had crushed her spirit, she was a helpless prey to the brutality of this man.

On his way home one night, he died from the rupture of a blood-vessel. When the body, wrapped in a

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blanket, was brought to the wife, she merely gazed at it without a word, so unable was she to grasp the full meaning of her deliverance.

Of a bright, independent, even exuberant disposition, adaptable and fascinating, with shafts of that wit which germinates, one cannot tell how, in the minds of certain little Parisian girls, who inhale from infancy the spicy atmosphere of the boulevards mingled every night with the applause or hisses issuing from the open doors of the theaters, she had retained, from her five years of slavery, a peculiar shyness, the dread of saying or doing too much, united to an ardent desire for liberty and a stern resolve to remain single.

Her husband, a man of the world, had trained her to receive his guests like some well-dressed, graceful and silent slave. In his set were many artists, whom she had received with curiosity and with whom she had conversed with pleasure, without daring to let them know how well she understood and appreciated them.

After the period of mourning was over she invited a few of them to dine with her. Two declined, but three came and, much to their astonishment, found in their hostess a woman of intellect and charm, who received them cordially, and tactfully expressed the pleasure with which she had formerly entertained them.

And, after a while, she made among these old acquaintances who had ignored and misjudged her, a little selection of her own. Being a widow and consequently perfectly free, she gathered around her a group of the most prominent men in Paris and a few distinguished women.

The first to belong to the little group became her intimate friends and formed a sort of background for those

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that came later. It was like a miniature court, to which each courtier brought personal fame or the glamor of an ancient name; there were several titles mingled with the aristocracy of brains.

Mme. de Burne's father, M. de Pradon, who lived in the apartment above, acted as her chaperon and presided over her Thursday dinners, which soon became famous throughout Paris. Invitations and introductions were eagerly sought and the circle would discuss and promptly reject any outsider of whom it did not approve. "Bons mots" were originated in her salon and repeated all over town. Actors, artists and rising poets strove to make their début under her wing; long-haired bards discovered by Gaston de Lamarthe were followed by Hungarian violinists introduced by Massival. Foreign dancers made their bow to the friends of Mme. de Burne, before appearing publicly at the Eden or the Folies-Bergére.

But Mme. de Burne, to whom society, under her husband's guidance was a burden, had the wisdom to limit her circle of acquaintances, a precaution thoroughly indorsed by her "entourage." Pleased, and frightened, at the same time, about what might be said and thought of her, she indulged her Bohemian inclinations with much worldly prudence. She was careful of her reputation, eschewed innovations of too startling a character, and successfully kept her caprices and audacities within the bounds of good form.

All the men of her circle had tried to win her; but none, it was said, had succeeded in his attempts. They admitted it to one another with profound astonishment, for men, do not, as a rule, and perhaps with reason, believe in the virtue of absolutely unencumbered women.

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A sort of legend went the rounds about her. It appeared that M. de Burne had entered with such coarseness and unexpected demands upon their marital relations, that she had been cured forever of love. Her friends often discussed this matter among themselves, and invariably reached the conclusion that any young girl brought up in the dream of future bliss and the expectation of a mystery which she imagines may be a little improper and pleasingly impure, but withal utterly refined, must necessarily be bewildered when brought in contact with the demands of matrimony at the hands of some coarse individual.

The society philosopher, Georges de Maltry, would snicker audibly and remark: "Her time will come, it always comes for women of her kind. And it will be the fiercer for having come late. With the artistic temperament that our friend possesses, she will fall in love with some singer or pianist."

But Gaston de Lamarthe held different views. Being an observer and a psychologist, given to the contemplation of people and things, he pretended to analyze women with unfailing accuracy. He classed Mme. de Burne with the unbalanced women of the day, a type of whom he had drawn in his interesting novel entitled "One Of Them." He had been the pioneer in dissecting and describing this new race of women, enslaved by their nerves, solicited by a thousand contradictory impulses that were not even desires, disillusioned, skeptical of everything without having tasted of anything, women who had been spoiled by the influence of circumstances and the literature of the day, creatures devoid of feeling and enthusiasm, combining the caprices of naughty children with the aridity of soul of hardened cynics.

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Like the others, he had failed in his attempts to win her.

One after the other, all the satellites of Mme. de Burne had been enamored of her. When the crisis had passed, they still remained her devoted slaves, in various stages of emotion. Little by little, they had formed a sort of chapel of which she was the Madonna, whom they never ceased discussing and worshiping even from afar. They praised, depreciated and criticized her, according to the moods and preferences she displayed. They were jealous and suspicious of each other, but they quickly banded together when any outsider, who might develop into a possible rival, tried to penetrate into their shrine. There were seven devoted followers: Massival, Gaston de Lamarthe, the puffy Fresnel, the young philosopher and man about town, M. Georges de Maltry, noted for his paradoxes, his erudition, his up-to-date eloquence, entirely incomprehensible even to his most devoted feminine admirers, as well as for his clothes, which were as carefully constructed as his theories. She had added to this "élite" a few men about town with a reputation for wit, such as the comte de Marantin, the baron de Gravil and several others. The two favorites of this little group appeared to be Massival and Lamarthe, who seemed to possess the gift of amusing Mme. de Burne with their Bohemian ways and slang and their ability to mock at every one, including herself, when she chose to permit it. But the natural or studied care she displayed to show no marked preference toward anyone, her blithe and teasing way, and the real equity that distinguished her favor, maintained among them a friendship seasoned with animosity, which rendered them highly amusing. Every

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now and then, one of the band, in order to anger the rest, introduced a friend. But, as the latter never was either a very prominent or interesting man, the circle, leagued against any such intruder, would banish him from their midst. Thus it happened that Massival introduced his comrade André Mariolle.

A butler in black livery made the announcement:

"Monsieur Massival!

"Monsieur Mariolle!

Under a huge pink silk shade, that threw the light of a tall bronze lamp upon a table of antique marble, two men and a woman were looking at an album. Lamarthe was standing between them, turning the leaves and discoursing upon the contents. As the men entered the room, one of the group turned and Mariolle caught sight of a fair face framed with waving auburn hair. The delicately chiseled nose, the firm lips, the deep dimples and slightly prominent chin, with a little cleft in it, gave a piquant air of mockery to the face, while the eyes, by a peculiar contrast, threw a tinge of melancholy over it. They were of a faded, washed out blue, and the black pupils shone large and dilated. The strange, brilliant glance seemed to reveal the use of morphine or perhaps only of that simple beauty aid, belladonna.

Mme. de Burne came forward and held out her hand: "I have often asked my friends to bring you," she said to Mariolle, "but I have had to repeat such a request a good many times before it is complied with."

She was a tall, well-proportioned woman, with slow, indolent gestures. Her gown, cut low at the neck, revealed a portion of her superb shoulders which, under

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the subdued light, looked like animated marble. Her hair was not red, but had the peculiar, undefinable tinge of russet autumn leaves.

She introduced M. Mariolle to her father, who arose and shook hands with the newcomer.

The men had formed into different groups and stood talking with the air of being perfectly at home. The presence of a young and pretty woman added zest to their discussions.

The puffy Fresnel was talking to the comte de Marantin. The devotion of Fresnel to Mme. de Burne, and her evident predilection for him, annoyed and shocked her friends. Fresnel, although young, was as unwieldy as a feather-bed; fat, wheezing, his head sparsely covered with a few straggling hairs, coarse and tedious, he certainly could have but one quality in the young widow's eyes, and that was a blind, constant adoration, which exceeded that of all the other men. They had nicknamed him "the seal." He was married, too, but he never thought of bringing his wife to Mme. de Burne's affairs, and the lady, it seems, was insanely jealous from a distance. Lamarthe and Massival, especially, criticized their friend's affection for "the seal." When they could not contain their displeasure and reproached her with her odd preference, this egotistical and vulgar taste, she would smile and reply:

"I like him as I would a faithful dog."

Georges de Maltry and Gaston de Lamarthe were discussing the most recent, but still unconfirmed, discovery of the bacteriologists.

M. de Maltry developed his thesis with elaborate and subtle skill, and the novelist, with the ready belief with

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which writers are inclined to receive anything that appeals to them as novel and original, accepted it with enthusiasm.

The philosopher of society, molded in evening clothes that brought out the slenderness of his tall figure and the pallor of his face, rising above the high collar, formed a decided contrast to Lamarthe.

Gaston de Lamarthe, whose title had produced within him a desire to act the man of the world and gentleman, was above all a writer, an unmerciful, ferocious writer. Armed with eyes that caught attitudes and gestures with the rapidity and precision of a camera, gifted with wonderful perception and the inborn instinct of his profession, this man spent every minute of his life gathering material for his books. A clear vision of external circumstances and an intuitive knowledge of the inner workings of the human brain, lent his books, that revealed none of the ordinary methods of the psychologists, and were parts torn from the living body of Reality, unequaled color, power and movement.

The successive appearance of each of his novels had thrown society into spasms of speculation, anger and mirth, for every one believed he could discern well-known people beneath the thin masks covering their identities, and so the novelist's progress through the salons left many an anxiety in its wake. He had also published a volume of personal reminiscences, portraying therein many men and women of his acqualntance, without any particular malevolent sentiment, but with such truth and severity that the originals had been hurt to the quick. Somebody had nicknamed him "Woe to his friends."

His taciturn, enigmatical nature was in part explained

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by a rumor circulated about him. He had, in the past, been madly in love with a faithless woman, so that now he was taking his revenge on others.

Massival and he were close friends, notwithstanding the fact that their characters were very different, the musician having a more expansive and sensitive temperament. He had achieved two great successes in his career, one, when he produced a work in Brussels and then transplanted it to the Opéra-Comique, and another, when an opera of his was accepted and produced at the Grand-Opéra, and hailed as the first fruit of a great talent. After that, he had experienced that strange stagnation which seems to attack most contemporaneous artists and which closely resembles premature paralysis. They do not grow old in fame and success as their fathers did, but, instead, appear threatened with impotency in the flower of their youth.

Lamarthe was quoted as saying that: "There are nothing but baffled great men in France nowadays."

Massival, at the time, appeared to be very much infatuated with Mme. de Burne, a fact which caused much comment in the little knot of admirers, so that all eyes were glued on him when he bent over and kissed her hand.

"Are we late?" he inquired.

"No," she replied, "we are still waiting for the baron de Gravil and the marquise de Bratiane!"

"Ah! How lucky to have the marquise to-night. We shall be able to have music."

"I hope so," said Mme. de Burne.

Presently the two belated guests arrived. The marquise, a plump little woman of Italian parentage, with black eyes, black brows, black lashes and thick black

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hair that almost covered her forehead, was considered the most remarkable singer among society women.

The baron de Gravil, an unobtrusive man with a flat chest and a large head, was not really himself without his 'cello. He was passionately fond of music, and refused to go anywhere it was not held in high esteem.

Dinner was announced and Mme. de Burne, taking Mariolle's arm, stepped aside to let her guests file past into the dining-room. When the last one had entered, she cast a rapid, sidelong glance at her partner, in which he thought he discovered a greater interest than the average society woman bestows on a man she entertains in her home for the first time.

The dinner proved to be monotonous and gloomy. Lamarthe was nervous and seemed hostile toward the others, not openly so, of course, for he wished to appear to advantage, but tacitly ill-humored and depressed. Massival, self-centered and absorbed, ate little, and shot furtive glances at the hostess, who also appeared absent-minded. Although she smiled and conversed with animation, she seemed to be laboring under some preoccupation that took her thoughts from her friends. However, she exerted herself for the marquise and for Mariolle; but the effort was visible, and she was plainly absent from herself and her guests.

Fresnel and M. de Maltry had a dispute over poetry. Fresnel possessed the usual opinions of the man about town, while those of M. de Maltry were as elaborate and incomprehensible to the lay mind as befitted one of the most complex rhymers.

Several times during the dinner, Mariolle's eyes had encountered the searching glance of Mme. de Burne, but it was already less intent and less curious. The

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marquise de Bratiane, the comte de Marantin and the baron de Gravil, were the only ones who kept up an uninterrupted conversation and enjoyed themselves.

Later, Massival, who was growing more and more gloomy as the evening wore on, sat down at the piano and preluded. Mme. de Burne, awakening from the spell she was under, immediately organized a little concert made up of the pieces she liked best. The marquise was in excellent voice and the presence of Massival lending excitement to the occasion, she sang with great artistic expression. The maëstro accompanied her with the melancholy face he always wore when playing. His hair, which was long, brushed the collar of his coat and mingled with his silky, lustrous beard. It was said that many women had loved, and still pursued him.

Mme. de Burne, seated near the piano, listened with her whole soul and gazed at him with a far away look in her eyes that gave Mariolle a jealous pang. He was not exactly jealous of the musician nor of this woman; but her gaze resting upon this *Illustrious Man* humiliated his masculine vanity, for he knew that "They" class us according to the degree of fame we have achieved. He had suffered in this way many times before, whenever he had been brought in contact with notable men in the presence of the women whose favor is by far the greatest reward of success.

At about ten o'clock, the baronne de Frémines and two rich Jewesses dropped in, and the conversation turned on an approaching marriage and an expected divorce.

Mariolle looked at Mme. de Burne, who was now sitting under a column supporting an enormous lamp. Her fine nose, the dimples in her cheeks and the pretty

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cleft in her chin made her look like a child, although she was close on to thirty and the faded blue of her eyes lent her face a peculiar mysteriousness. Under the light that bathed it, her skin shone like soft bland velvet, and her hair assumed ruddy tints whenever she moved her head.

She divined the masculine gaze directed at her from the opposite side of the drawing-room, and arising, she went over to him, smilingly, as one who obeys a summons.

"You must feel bored, monsieur," she said. "When one is not accustomed to a place one always feels bored."

He protested.

She drew up a chair and sat down beside him. Then they began to talk. It was so spontaneous on both sides, that it seemed as if they had had a previous knowledge of their opinions and sensations, and as if the same nature, impulses and education had predisposed them to understand one another and had ordained that they should meet.

Undoubtedly the young woman herself used some artifices; but Mariolle was fired with happy inspiration derived from the pleasure of having someone listen to him, and furnish him material for clever sallies. He was flattered by the manner in which she had received him, won by the art she displayed to captivate him, the charm with which she ensnared men, and he tried to reveal to her the portion of his intellect which he kept inviolate and which was so personal and charming, that it had attracted many sincere and durable friendships.

Presently she said:

"It is really delightful to talk to you, monsieur. But then, I was told that it would be."

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He reddened and boldly replied:

"And I, madame, was told that you were —".

But she interrupted him.

"Say a coquette. Well, I am, with the people I like. Everyone knows it. I don't even try to hide it, but you will find out that my coquetry is so impartial that it permits me to retain all my friends."

Her words seemed to imply: "Keep calm and do not be too conceited; do not be fooled into believing that you will receive more than the rest."

He replied:

"That is what I call warning people of the risk they run in coming to your house. Thank you, madame; I am delighted with your frankness."

She had led the conversation into personal channels and he took advantage of the opportunity to pay her some compliments which she seemed to enjoy; then he endeavored to arouse her curiosity by relating all he had heard about her in the various sets he frequented. She was unable to conceal her desire to hear it, although she professed great indifference concerning public opinion.

He drew a flattering portrait of an independent, superior and charming woman, who had gathered around her a number of notable men, but who had, nevertheless, remained a perfect social leader. With smiles and little "nos" of satisfied pride she protested against his description, but in her heart she was much amused by what he told her and very desirous of learning more.

Looking at her, Mariolle thought, "At the bottom of it all, she is nothing but a child, like all the rest." So he finished a pretty sentence in which he praised her genuine love for art, so rarely to be found in a woman.

Then she grew unexpectedly sarcastic, and assuming

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an expression of mockery, of that French "gouaillerie" which is the very marrow of our race, she replied:

"Mon Dieu, I must acknowledge that I really do not know positively whether I love art or artists."

Mariolle had overshot the mark. She showed him that she was not a fool.

"How could one love artists without loving art?" he questioned.

"Because sometimes they are funnier than society men."

"Yes, but their faults are more glaring."

"That is true."

"So you do not like music?"

She became grave again in a moment.

"Pardon me, I adore it. I believe that I love it more than anything else; Massival, however, is convinced that I know absolutely nothing about it."

"Has he told you so?"

"No, but he thinks it."

"How do you know?"

"Oh! we women guess almost everything that we do not positively know."

"So Massival thinks you know nothing about music?"

"I am sure of it. I can see it by the very manner in which he explains it to me, by the way he underlines his meaning, always thinking, 'It's no earthly use, and I only do it because you are so nice.'"

"Still," said Mariolle, "he has told me that the music heard here is better than in any other salon in Paris."

"Yes, thanks to him."

"And literature, are you not fond of that?"

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"I am very fond of it, and I even have the pretension of understanding it very well, in spite of Lamarthe's opinion."

"Who also believes you know nothing about it?"

"Of course."

"But who has never told you so?"

"Oh! yes, he has. He thinks that some women may have an accurate and delicate perception of the sentiments expressed, of the truth of the characters and of psychology in general, but that they are absolutely incapable of discerning what is superior in his profession, that is, Art. When he has once spoken the word *Art*, there is nothing left to do but to put him out of the house."

Mariolle smiled and asked:

"And what do you think about it, madame?"

"Oh, I have theories of my own on that subject. I believe that sentiment, you follow me — that sentiment — can make anything penetrate the brain of a woman; only it does not always remain there long. Do you understand?"

"No, not quite," replied Mariolle.

"I mean to say that, in order to render women as comprehensive as men, an appeal must always be made to their feminine nature before it is made to their intellect. We take little interest in the things that a man does not first render appealing, for we look at everything through sentiment. I will not say that we look at things through love — no — only through sentiment, which assumes all sorts of forms, manifestations and shades. Sentiment is something that belongs to us; you men do not grasp it very well, because it confuses you, while it illuminates us. Oh! I feel that all this must

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be very vague for you, but never mind! In a word, if a man loves a woman and is agreeable to her (it is essential that she should feel herself beloved in order to become capable of such an effort), he can, if he wants to take the trouble, communicate to her at times and piecemeal, his own intelligence. Oh! it often fades and dies out afterward, because we women forget so easily. We are intuitive and illuminable, but changeable, impressionable and readily influenced by our surroundings. If you knew how many states of mind I pass through, which make a different woman of me, according to the weather, my health, what I have read and heard. . . . Really, some days I have the soul of a mother, without the children, and others when I have almost the soul of a "demi-mondaine" . . . without the lovers."

Charmed, Mariolle answered:

"Do you think that almost all intelligent women are capable of such mental activity?"

"Yes," said she. "Only they go to sleep, and some have lives that are so planned that they incline them toward one thing or another."

He asked again:

"So, in your heart, you prefer music to all else?"

"Yes. But what I told you a minute ago is very true. I should certainly not have felt it as I do, adored it as I do, without that angel Massival. All the great masterpieces that I already loved passionately, he revealed to me by making me play them. What a pity that he is married!"

She uttered these last words in a bantering tone, but with so much real regret that they assumed a greater

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import than her theories on women and her love for art.

Massival, indeed, was married. He had contracted, before fame knocked at his door, one of those artistic unions from which a man suffers until he dies.

He never mentioned his wife, never took her in society, although he was very popular, and, although he was the father of three children, scarcely any one knew of the fact.

Marlolle laughed. She was decidedly agreeable, so odd and pretty. He gazed constantly, and with an insistence that did not seem to embarrass her in the least, on her serious and mocking face, with the bold nose and splendid coloring, so soft and warm that it reminded one of a fruit having just reached its full maturity. He was thinking: "Does she dye?" and sought a little accusing line of a darker or lighter shade at the roots of the hair, without being able to discover it.

A soft footstep on the thick carpet roused him and made him turn his head. Two footmen were bringing in the tea-table. The little blue flame of the alcohol lamp set the water to singing softly under the huge silver teapot, that shone like some big, complicated chemical instrument.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" she inquired.

When he accepted, she arose and walked over to the tea-table. She carried herself splendidly, with her shoulders thrown back, her head erect and with none of the peculiar swing that renders the walk of some women so conspicuous.

Her profile that detached itself clearly from the

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draperies of the salon, as she stood by the tea-table with its bewildering assortment of candies, cakes and sandwiches, gave Mariolle the opportunity to note the slender waist and hips and the wide shoulders and full bust that he had admired a little while ago. Her light gown trailed behind her on the dark carpet and seemed like an endless body. Presently a thought came to him: "Why, she is a perfect mermaid!"

She was now going from one guest to the other, offering the refreshments with an exquisite grace and ease.

Mariolle's eyes were following her with interest when suddenly Lamarthe, who was walking about with his cup in his hand, came up to him and said:

"Shall we go home together?"

"Why, certainly."

"Well, let's go at once then, for I feel a little tired."

"Very well. Let's go."

They departed.

When they reached the sidewalk the novelist inquired:

"Are you going directly home or to the club?"

"I am going to the club for a little while."

"To the 'Tambourins?'"

"Yes."

"Then I will leave you at the door. I don't care for those places myself. I never go. I belong only on account of the cabs."

They linked arms and walked toward Saint-Augustin; at first they were silent, but after a while Mariolle spoke.

"What a strange woman! What do you think of her?"

Lamarthe burst out laughing.

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"The spell is on you," he replied. "You are going to feel it like the rest of us; I had that malady too, but I am cured. My dear fellow, the spell, for her friends, consists of being unable to speak or think of anything else but her, whenever, and wherever, they happen to meet."

"Well, it's the first time in my case, and it's only natural that I should, as I hardly know her."

"Very well, then. We will talk of her. Well, you are going to fall in love with her; it's absolutely fatal, everyone goes through it."

"Is she so very attractive?"

"Yes and no. Those men who admire the old-fashioned woman, with a soul, and a heart, and feelings, the woman who is portrayed in old romances, take such a dislike to her that they end by saying infamous things. But the others, like ourselves, who appreciate modern charm, are compelled to acknowledge that she is delightful, providing one does not become too much attached to her, and that is precisely what everyone does. Well, it does not kill you, nor even make you suffer very much; but you feel furious to think that she is not differently constituted. You will pass through it all, if she so wills; and I think she already likes you."

Mariolle, giving vent to his secret thoughts, exclaimed:

"Oh! I am nothing in her opinion but just a plain, ordinary individual, and I think she cares for titles of every description."

"Yes, she certainly does, but, at the same time she laughs at them. The most eminent and popular man will not go there a dozen times unless he happens to please her; and she has attached herself in an idiotic

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fashion to that fool Fresnel and that crazy Maltry. She becomes infatuated with the silliest people just because they happen to amuse her more than we do, or perhaps because, in their hearts, they love her better, and every woman cares more for that than for anything else."

And Lamarthe, encouraged by Mariolle, continued to discuss Mme. de Burne with genuine interest and enthusiasm, like a man full of his subject, but a little puzzled, who wavers between true observations and false deductions.

"She is not alone in her class," he went on; "there are fifty or more such women at the present time. Take the little Baronne de Frémines, for instance, who is just the same, only a little bolder, and is married to a queer sort of individual, so that her house is one of the most amusing asylums for the mentally unbalanced, that one can find in Paris. I go there a good deal, too."

Without thinking, they had walked down the boulevard Malesherbes, the rue Royale, the avenue des Champs-Elysées and were approaching the Arc de Triomphé. Lamarthe suddenly glanced at his watch.

"My dear fellow," he said, "we have been talking about her exactly one hour and ten minutes; that is enough for to-day. I will accompany you to the club some other time. You had better go home and to bed, and I will do the same."

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II

IT was a large room hung in beautiful Persian chintz which had been brought to her by a diplomat of her acquaintance. The background was yellow, as if it had been dipped into golden cream, and the designs of every color, but in which Persian green predominated, represented weird constructions with peculiar roofs, around which flew winged lions, long-horned antelopes and wonderful birds of Paradise.

Little furniture, only three long tables covered with green marble slabs on which was everything necessary to a woman's toilet. The middle one was covered with thick crystal basins and the second one presented a bewildering array of flasks, bottles and vases of every description and shape, with silver stoppers bearing her coat of arms. On the third table were all the implements of modern coquetry, mysteriously, delicately wrought. In this boudoir, only two divans and a few low chairs designed for lounging, were to be found. Occupying an entire side of the wall, was a huge mirror, that broke like a bright horizon upon the room. It consisted of three panels whose lateral sides were hung on hinges so that the young woman could contemplate her image from every point. To the right, in an alcove which was usually hidden by a curtain, was the bath-tub or rather a swimming-pool also of green marble with two steps leading down into it. A bronze Cupid, a delightful conception of the sculptor Prédolè, was poised on the edge, and hot and cold water poured from the shell he held in either hand. The walls were lined with Venetian mirrors which also covered the ceiling,

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holding and reflecting in each one of their sections the pool and the bather.

In one corner stood the writing desk, a simple and beautiful piece of English furniture laden with all sorts of papers, letters and torn envelopes with brilliant crests. It was here that she wrote and spent her time when she was alone.

Stretched on one of the couches, in a loose gown of China silk, that disclosed her beautiful, firm arms, her hair piled high on her head in a mass of burnished gold, Mme. de Burne was resting after her bath.

The maid knocked at the door, and brought in a letter.

She took it, glanced at the subscription, tore open the envelope, scanned the first lines and said quietly to the servant: "I will ring for you in an hour."

When the maid had gone, she smiled a smile of victory. The very first words had shown her that here, at last, was Mariolle's declaration of love. He had resisted much longer than she believed he would, for, during two or three months, she had angled for him with a greater display of charm and fascination than she had employed for any other man. He seemed suspicious, forewarned and forearmed against her insatiable coquetry. It had taken many intimate chats in which she had called into play all her greatest physical charms, all the captivating brilliancy of her mind, and also many musical evenings where, filled with the souls of the great composers, they had been moved by the same emotion, before she read in his eyes the admission that he was vanquished. She knew the symptoms well. She had so often, with feline skill and wanton curiosity, roused this secret and torturing longing in the eyes of the men

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she had captivated! It amused her to watch them become more and more enslaved, more and more dominated by her invincible fascination, to be for them the One of all others, the sovereign and capricious Idol! It had developed in her slowly, like a latent instinct, the instinct of battle and of conquest. During her years of married life, a need of reprisals had perhaps sprung into being, an obscure desire to give back to men what she had received at the hands of one of them, to be the strongest, to break their wills and to make them suffer. But she was a coquette by nature; and as soon as she felt free, she started out in pursuit of admirers as the hunter tracks the game. Her heart did not hunger for emotion, like the hearts of tender and sentimental women; she did not seek the sole love of one man, nor happiness through a great passion. She only desired the adulation, the homage, and the devotion of a multitude of men. Whoever became a visitor to her house, had also to be under the spell of her beauty, and no intellectual interest attached her very long to anyone who resisted her fascination, either because he cared little for the game of love, or because he was engaged elsewhere. To remain her friend, a man had to be in love with her; but, if he was, she showed wonderful attentions, displayed charming consideration to retain all those she had captivated. Once a man was admitted within the ranks of her admirers, he belonged to her by right of conquest. She governed them all with consummate skill, according to their faults and qualities and the nature of their jealousy.

Those who made too many demands were banished for a time and then re-instated after severe conditions had been imposed; and she enjoyed this game of fasci-

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nation to such an extent, that it amused her as much to charm old men as young ones.

It even looked as if she regulated her own affection according to the degree of ardor she inspired; the fat Fresnel, useless and heavy satellite, remained one of her favorites, because of the frenzied passion she knew he felt for her.

She was not totally indifferent to masculine qualities and she had experienced several infatuations known to herself only, which she had choked back when they had threatened to become dangerous.

Each newcomer bringing the novelty of his amorous pleadings and unexplored nature, especially if he happened to be an artist, whom she knew to possess keener refinements, shadings and delicacies of sentiment than any other men, had awakened in her the recurring dream of a long " liaison " and a great passion. But, undecided and prudent, she had always refused herself until the would-be lover had ceased to affect her. She possessed also the skeptical eyes of the modern woman, who in a few weeks, can strip the greatest man of every shred of prestige. As soon as they became infatuated with her, they, in the bewilderment into which she threw their minds and hearts, forgot to assume their poses and allowed her to discover that they were all alike, paltry creatures that she completely dominated.

In order that such a perfect woman as she was might become attached to a man, he would have to possess extraordinary merit!

However, she was greatly bored. She felt no attraction for society, and took part in its diversions with sleepy eyes and an absent mind. Amused only by a flirtation or her own aggressive fancies, by a lively

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curiosity concerning certain things and certain people, attaching herself just sufficiently not to become disgusted too soon with what she had admired and appreciated, and not sufficiently to experience real satisfaction through some taste or affection, tormented by her nerves and not by desires, deprived of all the absorbing interests of simple or ardent souls, she lived in cheerful "ennui," without the faith incident to happiness, thoroughly tired of it all, but imagining herself satisfied.

She imagined herself satisfied because she thought she was the most charming and fortunate of women. Proud of her fascination, which she tried on all occasions, of her irregular beauty, strange and captivating, sure of the worth of her intellect, which allowed her to divine and to comprehend many things which escaped other women, of her wit which was appreciated by so many clever men, ignorant of the limits of her mind, she believed she was a creature almost unique, a rare pearl, — glowing in a commonplace world, which appealed to her as monotonous and empty, because she was so superior to it.

She never suspected that her own individuality was responsible for the continued "ennui" she suffered, but only accused others and rendered them responsible for her gloomy moods. If they failed to distract and amuse her sufficiently, it was because they lacked genuine qualities and attractions.

"Everybody is a bore," she declared laughingly. "The only tolerable people are those whom I like, solely because I do like them."

One pleased her especially by finding her peerless. Knowing well that success does not come without effort, she spared no trouble to please and knew nothing so de-

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lightful as the homage of eyes that were adoring and of hearts that beat at a word.

She was much astonished at the trouble she had had to capture André Mariolle, for she felt, the first time they had met, that he liked her. Little by little, she had guessed his shy nature, very concentrated and subtle, and had shown him, in order to triumph over his weakness, so much regard, so much preference and natural liking, that he had ended by capitulating.

Especially, had she found him infatuated during the last month; he was taciturn and feverish, but rebelled at the avowal! Ah! avowals! In her heart, she did not like them because, when they were too direct and expressive, she was compelled to banish the offender. What she loved were discreet manifestations, half-confidences, veiled allusions, a sort of moral adoration; and she displayed exceptional tactfulness and skill to win from her admirers this reserve of expression.

For a month she had been awaiting the decisive words from Mariolle's lips, the clear or veiled phrase, according to the nature of a man, which relieves the oppressed heart.

He had not spoken a word, but he had written. It was a long letter: four pages! She held it a long time, filled with satisfaction. Finally she lay down on the lounge and let her slippers fall upon the floor. Then she began to read. She was amazed. He told her with serious words, that he did not wish to suffer through her any longer, and that he already knew her too well to fall a victim to her wiles. In polite sentences, with many compliments, through which pierced his love, he let her know that he was aware of her dealings with men, that he was captivated too, but that he was going

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to break away from his servitude. He was going away, and would take up his wanderings again.

It was an eloquent and resolute farewell.

She was surprised in reading and re-reading these four pages of tenderly irritated and passionate prose. She rose, put on her slippers, and began to walk to and fro, with sleeves thrown back and small hands thrust into the pockets of her dressing gown.

Bewildered by this unexpected letter she was thinking: "He really writes very well, it's sincere and touching. He writes better than Lamarthe; it is not so theatrical."

She had a desire to smoke and went over to the table carrying her perfumes, where, in a porcelain box, lay her cigarettes; she took one, lit it and walked to the mirror in which three young women appeared simultaneously. When she stood quite close to the glass, she stopped, made a little bow and smiled approvingly upon her reflection. Then she inspected her teeth, her eyes, raised her arms, laid her hands on her hips and turned sidewise in order to perceive herself in the three panels.

She stood there some time, delighted with the image the glass reflected. A sensual pleasure almost equaling that of a man came over her, as she admired the perfection of her body, the piquancy of her upturned face.

Every day she would stand thus before the looking-glass; her maid, who had often caught her in this contemplation of herself, was wont to say: "Madame looks at herself so much, that she will wear out every mirror in the house."

But this love of self was the secret of her power over men. By dint of admiration for herself and the search for everything that could enhance her personal charms,

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render her grace more potent and her eyes more mysterious, by pursuing every artifice which adorned her in her own belief, she had naturally discovered everything that would appeal the most to others.

More beautiful, and more indifferent to her beauty, she would not have possessed the fascination that incited love in almost all the men who were not at the outset rebellious to the nature of her power.

Tiring of her contemplation after a little while, she said to her smiling reflection (and it moved its lips to repeat): "We shall see, my dear sir." Then, crossing the boudoir, she sat down in front of her desk.

This is what she wrote:

"Dear Monsieur Mariolle, come to see me to-morrow afternoon at four. I shall be alone, and hope to reassure you concerning the imaginary danger you dread.

"I call myself your friend, and I will prove to you that I am what I claim to be.

"MICHELE DE BURNE."

What a simple gown she wore when, the next afternoon, she greeted André Mariolle! A little gray gown, quite simply made, open at the neck, with sleeves that molded the arms, a waist that molded the bust and a skirt that molded the hips and limbs.

When he entered, with a grave face, she went to meet him with extended hands. He kissed them. They sat down and silence for a few moments prevailed between them.

He did not know what to say and waited for her to begin. Finally she decided to speak.

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"Well! Let's take up the question at once. What is the matter? Do you know that you wrote me a very insolent letter?"

"I know it," he replied, "and I beg your pardon. I am, and have always been, excessively, even brutally frank, with everybody. I could have gone away without the unnecessary and rude explanations that I addressed to you. But I judged it more loyal to act according to my nature, and rely on your comprehension, of which I am sure."

In a tone of satisfied pity she resumed:

"Well, well! What does this folly mean? . . ."

"I would rather not speak of it," he said.

But she cut him short, and would not let him continue.

"I asked you to come so as to speak of it; and we will speak of it until you are quite convinced that you do not run any danger whatever." She began to laugh like a schoolgirl and her youthful gown lent a childish ring to her voice.

He stammered:

"I wrote you the truth, the absolute truth, the truth of which I stand in fear."

Becoming grave again she said:

"Yes, I know; all my friends go through it. You also wrote that I was a terrible coquette; I admit that I am, but nobody dies from it. I even believe that no one suffers especially. It is what Lamarthe calls: 'the spell;' you are feeling it now, but it passes off and one falls into . . . what shall I call it? . . . a chronic state of love, that does not hurt and that I keep up in all my friends so that they shall be very devoted and faithful to me. Well? Am I not sincere,

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and frank and game? Have you known many women who would dare to tell a man what I have just told you?"

She had such a funny and determined air about her, an air at once so candid and convincing that he could not help smiling at her.

"All your friends," he replied, "are men who have often been exposed to like perils, even before having met you. Seared and burned, they can stand the fire to which you submit them; but I have never passed through the experience, madame. And for some time I have felt that it will be terrible if I allow myself to be absorbed by the feeling that is growing in my heart."

She became suddenly familiar and leaning close to him, she clasped her hands about her knees.

"Listen to me," she said, "I am speaking seriously. It annoys me to lose a friend through a fear which I believe is imaginary. You will love me, let us say; but the men of to-day do not love women enough to be really hurt by it. Believe me. I know them."

She paused, then added with the peculiar smile of a woman who utters a truth while she believes it to be a falsehood.

"I really have nothing to make a man worship me madly. I am too modern. I will be a friend, a nice friend, for whom you will feel real affection, but nothing else, for I will look out for that."

With a more serious manner she added:

"In any case, I warn you that I am incapable of becoming really infatuated with anybody, and that I would treat you like the rest, very well, but never better. I hate despots and jealous men. When I was

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married, I had to endure everything from my husband; but from a friend, a mere friend, I do not wish to accept any of those tyrannical affections which are the bane of cordial relations. You see that I am as nice as I can be and that I talk to you like a comrade without withholding anything. Will you try what I have proposed to you? If it does not work, it will always be time enough to go away, no matter how serious your case. A lover gone, is a lover cured."

He was looking at her, already conquered by her voice, her gestures, the whole intoxication of her presence, and he muttered, resigned and moved at the thought of her proximity.

"I accept, madame; and if I suffer, why, it cannot be helped! You are certainly worth the suffering."

She stopped him.

"Now, do not let us say any more about it, never mention it again." And she led the conversation into different channels which contained no dangerous element.

He left her after an hour, feeling tortured, for he loved her, and joyful, for she had requested him, and he had promised her, not to go away.

III

HE was tortured, for he loved her. Different from ordinary lovers, to whom the chosen one appears surrounded by a halo of perfections, he had become attached to her with the wide-open, suspicious and far-seeing eyes of the man who has never been completely subjugated. His restless and lazy mind, always on the defensive in life, had preserved him

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from passions. Several flirtations, two short liaisons that had died out in "ennui" and some purchased loves that had ended in disgust, composed his emotional past. He looked upon women as a necessary convenience for those who wanted a home and children, and as a relative amusement for those to whom love is a pastime.

In meeting Mme. de Burne, he had been forewarned by the confidences of her friends. What he knew of her interested and pleased him, although it also repelled him to a certain extent. He did not, in principle, care for gamblers who never make good.

After their first meeting, he had thought her very amusing, animated by a peculiar and contagious charm! The natural and artificial beauty of this slender, blonde woman with arms made to enlace and envelop, and long, slender limbs made to flee like a gazelle, with feet so little that they left no tracks behind them, seemed to him the very symbol of vain hope. What was more, he had experienced during his chats with her, a pleasure that he never hoped to find in the conversation of any society woman. Gifted with a mind full of familiar vivaciousness, and caressing sarcasm, she sometimes allowed herself to drift into sentimental and plastic moods, as if beneath all her mocking gayety, there still hovered the shadow of the poetical tenderness of her ancestors. And it rendered her exquisite.

She petted him, being desirous of winning him like the rest; and he was with her as much as possible. It was is if an element emanated from her that drew him like a magnet, an element that partook of her glance, her speech, her smile, although he often came away with a feeling of irritation at what she had said or done.

The more he felt enveloped by the mysterious fluid

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by which a woman penetrates and enslaves a man, the more he understood her and suffered from her temperament, which he ardently wished were different.

But all the things of which he disapproved had surely drawn and captivated him, in spite of his reason, more than her real qualities.

Her coquetry, which was so obvious, which, like a fan, she opened and closed, in the face of everybody, according to the men she liked, her manner of taking everything lightly, that he had thought amusing at one time and which now seemed threatening; the constant desire for distraction, and novelty which mastered her, all this exasperated him to such an extent, that he often resolved to render his calls few and far between, until the time when he would suppress them entirely.

The next day he was inventing some pretext to call on her. What he especially experienced as his infatuation grew, was the insecurity of this love and the certainty of future suffering.

Oh! he was not blinded; he was sinking into this sentiment little by little, like a man who lets himself drown out of sheer exhaustion, because his craft has capsized and he is too far from the shore. He knew her as well as it was possible to know her, passion having developed his insight, and he could not help thinking about her all the time. With untiring obstinacy he sought to analyze this woman's soul, this incomprehensible mixture of gayety and disillusion, of reason and childishness, of affection and mutability, of contradictory inclinations, united and coördinated to form a creature abnormal, puzzling and delightful.

But why did she captivate him so? He asked himself this question over and over and could not reach a

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satisfactory conclusion, for, with his reflective, observing and modest temperament, he should logically have sought a woman with all the old-fashioned and peaceful qualities, tender charm and constant devotion, apt to insure a man's happiness. But in this woman he encountered something unexpected; she was one of those beings that are the beginning of a generation, that are unlike anything one has ever known, and that cast around them, even through their faults, the evil attraction of an awakening.

After the dreamy, passionate and romantic women of the Restoration, appeared the joyous ones of the imperial reign, convinced of Pleasure's reality; and now came a new transformation of the eternal feminine, in these ultra-refined, sensitive creatures, with restless, irresolute souls, who seemed to have passed through all the narcotics used to quiet or stimulate the nerves: chloroform which deadens the senses, ether and morphine which dull emotion and produce strange dreams.

He appreciated in her the charm of a factitious being, fashioned and trained to captivate. She was a rare "object de luxe," exquisite and delicate, that attracted the eye and roused the appetite, like some of the expensive fruits seen in shop windows, that have been arranged only for display.

When he felt absolutely convinced that he was on the brink of a precipice, he began to reflect with terror upon the dangers of his infatuation. What would become of him? How would she act? She would surely act as she had probably acted with every one else; she would bring him by degrees to the state where a man obeys the whims of a woman as a dog follows his master's footsteps, and she would gather him into her

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fold of more or less prominent admirers. But had she, indeed, played this part with everyone? Was there not one whom she had loved, really loved, a month, a day, an hour, with one of those impulses, instantly suppressed, which sometimes took possession of her?

After a reception or dinner, where her admirers had become warmed by her presence, he would speak of her endlessly, but he soon discovered that they were all dissatisfied, irritated and restless, like men whom no tangibility has appeased.

No, she had loved none of these popular idols; and as for himself, who was nothing beside them, whose name and personality passed unheeded in a crowd, what could he be to her? Nothing, nothing, a mere individual, a satellite, who, for women of that stamp, becomes the commonplace, useful acquaintance, who has no more pungency than wine that is diluted with water.

Had he been a well-known man, he might have accepted this rôle, which his celebrity would have rendered less mortifying. But, unknown, he would have none of it. And so he bade her farewell.

When he received her short reply, he felt as if a sudden light had broken upon him, and when she made him promise that he would not go away, it was like a great burden lifted from his soul.

Several days went by without bringing any change in their relations; but, after the reaction that follows crises had died out, he felt his desire for her grow greater than ever before. He had resolved never to mention the subject to her, but he had not promised not to write; so, one evening, when sleep would not be wooed, he sat down involuntarily at his desk and began to express his feelings on paper. It quieted him; it seemed as if his

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anguish grew less acute and he was finally able to retire and to sleep.

On awakening the next morning, he re-read the few pages he had written, thought them sufficiently passionate, addressed them, and mailed them late at night so that she would receive them early the following day.

He thought she would not take exception to a few written pages; the most severe women have infinite indulgence for sincere love-letters. And these letters, when written by trembling hands, with eyes filled with a dear image, have an irresistible power over the most stubborn hearts.

Late that afternoon, he called on her, to see how she would receive him and what she might say. He found M. de Pradon sitting with his daughter, smoking cigarettes. He often spent hours with her, for he treated her more like a fascinating woman, than like a daughter. She had infused into their relation and their affection, a bit of the homage she rendered herself and which she exacted from those around her.

When she saw Mariolle, her face glowed with pleasure. She held out her hand spontaneously and her smile said clearly: "I like you very much."

Mariolle hoped that M. de Pradon would soon take his departure. But he remained. Although he knew his daughter, and had long ceased to suspect her, so unsexed did she appear to him, still he watched her with a curious, restless attention. He wished to know if this new friend had any chance of lasting success, what he was, what merits he possessed. Would he simply be a passing fancy, like so many others, or would he become a permanent member of the little circle?

So M. de Pradon remained, and Mariolle realized

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at once that he would not be able to get rid of him. He decided to make the best of the situation and even tried to captivate him if he could, thinking that kindliness or even neutrality was better, in this case, than animosity. He exerted himself and was entertaining, cheerful and bright, without any of the poses of a suitor. She was pleased, and inwardly thought: "At least he's a good actor and not a fool."

And M. de Pradon thought: "Here is a delightful man who does not seem to have let my little girl turn his head, like the rest of them."

When Mariolle took leave of them, they were both charmed with him. But he left the house with a dissatisfied, restless feeling in his heart. When he was with this woman he suffered intensely from the way she had made him a slave to her wiles, knowing as he did, that he would knock on her heart in vain, like a prisoner who uselessly pounds on the iron door of his cell.

He was sure of belonging to her without a question, sure that he could not escape his fate, so he resolved to be crafty, patient, tenacious and dissimulated, to conquer her through his adoration of her, through the servitude to which he would voluntarily submit.

His letter had flattered her. He would write again, and he wrote. Nearly every night when he came home, at the time when the mind, excited by the happenings of the day, enlarges everything which interests and absorbs it, he would sit down at his desk, and pour out his soul to her. The poetical germ that so many lazy men let die within themselves, grew under the spell this woman cast. By expressing his love daily in ways which were constantly diverse, his ardor become more and more impassioned. He thought all day long, and when night

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came, he found irresistible expressions that sprang from his fevered brain like sparks of fire. He blew on the flame of his desire till it grew to be a conflagration, for really passionate love-letters are often more dangerous to the writer than to her who receives them.

By keeping himself in this constant state of intoxication, by warming his blood with words, and giving up his soul to this one thought, he ended by losing the sense of reality concerning Mme. de Burne.

He ceased to perceive her as she had appeared to him in the beginning, and only saw her through the lyrism of his language; so that all the things he wrote became as so many truths to him. The daily idealization he indulged in, transformed her into what he desired she should be. His past resistance melted before the undeniable affection she showed him. At this time, although they had said nothing, she certainly preferred him to the others and took no trouble to conceal the fact. So he thought, with a sort of hopeful dementia, that she might end by loving him.

She felt with naive joy the seduction of his letters, No man had ever cherished and flattered her to such an extent, and with such silent reserve. No one had ever had the delightful idea to present to her, on the small silver tray that her maid brought to her bedside every morning, a little breakfast of sentiment contained in an envelope. And what was so pleasing, was that he never mentioned it, appearing to ignore it himself and remaining in her drawing-room the most reserved friend of all. Never did he allude in the slightest way to the love which he showered upon her.

Of course she had received many love letters in her life, but they were very different from these. They

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were less reserved, more pressing and more like summons. During three months, the three months the spell lasted, Lamarthe had sent her many letters, letters of an infatuated writer who expresses his passion as perfectly as possible. In her desk, stowed away in a special drawer, were scores of these letters, full of charm and wit, that the novelist, really very much in love, had written her, until the last hope of success withered in his heart. Mariolle's were totally different. They revealed such energetic concentration, such sincerity, such complete submission and lasting devotion, that she received them with more pleasure than she had ever felt.

Her friendship for the man himself grew apace. She invited him as often as she could, inasmuch as he exhibited the greatest discretion and seemed to ignore, when they were together, that he had ever touched a sheet of paper to tell her of his adoration. She thought the situation was original, worthy of a novel, and the deep satisfaction of having a man so entirely devoted to her, produced a sort of liking that prejudiced her in his favor.

Until now, in every heart she had captured, she felt, in spite of her vanity, that other preoccupations held a place; she discovered and noted in them powerful interests that had nothing whatever to do with her. Jealous of music with Massival, of literature with Lamarthe, of one thing or the other, dissatisfied with the half-triumphs she obtained, powerless to drive everything before her in the souls of these men of ambition, whose profession is a tyrannical mistress, whom nothing in the world can dethrone, she, for the first time in her life, had met a man to whom she was everything. At least

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he told her that she was. Fresnel, alone, certainly loved her as much as Mariolle. But then he was Fresnel. She knew that no one had ever been so entirely possessed by her; and her selfish gratitude toward the man who gave her this triumph had all the appearances of affection. She had grown to need him, to need his glance, his presence, his domestication. If her vanity was less flattered than by the others, the sovereign exigencies that are a part of the body and soul of a coquette, the wanton instinct of domination were flattered more.

Like a country which is being conquered, she slowly entered his life by a succession of small invasions that became more numerous each day. She organized fêtes, theater parties, dinners, in his honor; she dragged him around after her with the pride of a conqueror. She could not do without him, or rather, without his slavish devotion.

He obeyed her every caprice, happy in the thought of her friendship; basked in the light of her eyes, the sweetness of her voice and smile; and lived in a mad whirl of love and desire that scorched him like a burning flame.

PART SECOND

I

MARIOLLE had just arrived at the apartment. He sat down in the drawing-room and waited, for she was out, although she had telegraphed him that morning to come to her.

Her drawing-room, in which everything pleased him,

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in which he delighted to be, produced nevertheless a feeling of oppression within him whenever he was alone in it. So he rose and walked up and down, obsessed by the fear that something might happen to prevent their meeting and postpone it to the following day.

The sound of carriage wheels in the street below gave him a joyful start and when the doorbell rang his fears vanished as if by magic.

She came into the room with her hat on, a thing she never did, and went up to him in a hurried, happy way.

"I have news for you," she announced.

"What is it, madame?"

She looked at him and laughed.

"Why, I am going out of town for a few days."

His face fell.

"How pleased you seem to tell me this," he stammered.

"Yes. Sit down and I will tell you all about it. You know, or you do not know, that M. Valsaci, my poor mother's brother, a civil engineer, has a villa at Avranches where he spends most of his life with his wife and children and where he pursues his profession. We go to see them every summer; this year, I did not want to go; but he got angry and made a painful scene. In regard to this, I want to tell you that my father is very jealous of you, and makes scenes, too, for he thinks that I am compromising myself with you. You will have to see me less frequently. But do not worry, I will arrange matters. So papa scolded me and made me promise that I would spend ten days or perhaps two weeks at Avranches. We leave Tuesday morning. What do you say to it?"

"I say that it breaks my heart," replied Mariolle.

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"Is that all?" she demanded.

"What else can I say? I cannot prevent it."

"Don't you think we can arrange something?"

"Why . . . no . . . I really don't know. Do you?"

"Yes, I have an idea. Avranches is quite near Mont Saint-Michel. Do you know Mont Saint-Michel?"

"No, madame."

"Well then, supposing that next Friday you have the sudden inspiration to go and visit that marvelous place. You can stop over at Avranches, take a walk in the Public Gardens on Saturday night, and meet me quite casually. Of course, papa will make a face, but I don't care. I will plan an excursion to the abbey for the next day. Be enthusiastic, be as nice as you know how to be. Captivate my aunt and invite us all to dinner at the inn where we shall stop. We will spend the night at the inn and you and I will not have to separate before the next day. You can go back by Saint-Malo, and a week later, I will be in Paris. Isn't that well thought out and am I not nice to you?"

In an impulse of gratitude he murmured:

"You are everything I care for in the world."

"Shh!" . . . she said.

They looked at each other for a few seconds, she smilingly, with the light of sincere affection in her eyes, and he sullenly, with tense features. He felt like rolling at her feet, biting her dress, screaming and letting her see what he did not have the power to put into words, what filled him from his head to his feet, his soul as well as his body, what was inexpressibly painful because he could give it no utterance: his love, his terrible and entrancing love.

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But she understood him without words, just as a marksman feels that his bullet has hit the center of the target. There was nothing but herself in this man. He belonged to her more than she belonged to herself. She was satisfied and consequently she thought him delightful.

She remarked good-humoredly:

"So it's settled. We will take this trip."

"Why yes, madame, it's settled," he stammered in an unsteady voice.

Then after another pause she continued:

"I cannot retain you any longer to-day. I only came back to tell you about my trip, for I leave the day after to-morrow. All to-morrow is taken up with engagements and I still have five or six errands to attend to before dinner."

He rose at once and took leave, although he felt a tightening of the heart at her summary dismissal.

He spent four of the longest days of his life, between the time he bade her good-bye and the morning he took the train for Avranches. He hardly slept the night before his departure, so excited was he by the prospect of the trip. His darkened, silent room, through which passed the occasional rattle of a belated "fiacre," oppressed him like a prison. As soon as dawn gleamed through the drawn curtains, he jumped out of bed, opened his window and glanced at the sky. He was haunted by the dread that it might rain. But the sky was clear. A slight mist enveloped all things, a sign of prospective heat. He dressed quickly and was ready two hours before the time set for his departure; and, for fear his man might not be able to get him a cab, he sent him out before he had finished breakfast.

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At last he was on his way to the station, but when he reached the gare de Montparnasse, he found out that he was ahead of time and would have to wait forty minutes before the train pulled out. There was only one empty compartment and he hired it so as to be alone with his thoughts. When the train started and he felt the regular, swift motion of the wheels over the smooth tracks, his ardor, instead of diminishing, grew more intense and he experienced the silly, childlike desire to push with all his might against the wall of the compartment to increase the locomotive's speed.

For a long while he sat motionless, absorbed by his thoughts and paralyzed by hope; then little by little, after the train had passed Argentan his eyes were attracted to the Normandy scenery.

It was toward the end of July, the season when the earth sends forth its greatest vigor, when the trees and pastures glow with full strength. In all the enclosures separated by high walls of foliage, large oxen and spotted cows, russet steers with wide foreheads, stood looking over the fences or nibbling the short grass. Great orchards of apple-trees, large pastures surrounded by trees of various kinds, whose thick tops glistened in the sun, followed one after the other in quick succession. Brooks glided noiselessly past poplars and weeping willows; and Mariolle, enchanted, let his gaze wander over this great fertile orchard inhabited by armies of sleek cattle.

When he changed cars at the Fontigny station, his impatience came back to him with a rush, and during the last forty minutes he spent on the train, he frequently glanced at his watch. Every now and then he

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looked out of the window, and finally he perceived, perched on the top of a hill, the town where She was waiting for him. They were late and only an hour separated him from the time when he was to meet her, by chance, in the public promenade.

He stepped into a hotel 'bus and the ascent to Avranches began. The town from a distance looked like a fortified castle. Seen at close range, it was an old and pretty Norman city with small, regular houses, grouped close together, and wearing an air of medieval arrogance and modest homeliness.

As soon as Mariolle had deposited his grip in the room assigned to him, he asked the way to the "gardin Botanique" and started out rapidly, although he was in advance of the hour named. He secretly hoped that she might also be in advance.

Arriving at the gate, he saw that the garden was empty or nearly so. Three old men were taking an airing, and a family of young English girls and boys, with thin legs, were playing under the eye of a watchful governess.

Mariolle with beating heart, walked up and down the paths. He reached a long alley of elm trees that cut the garden in twain and formed a dome of thick green foliage overhead; he walked along until he had almost reached a terrace overlooking the horizon when suddenly his thoughts were abruptly turned from the One who had brought him there.

From the coast on which he was standing, stretched a wonderful desert of sand that mingled in the distance with the sea and the sky. A river pursued its course over the unbroken surface, and under the flaming sky,

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pools of clear water studded the beach with luminous spots, that seemed like holes opened on an interior firmament.

In the center of this tawny desert, wet with the receding tide, loomed, at about twelve or fifteen miles from the shore, a monumental rock, a weird and fantastic pyramid surmounted by a cathedral.

Its only neighbor on these immense wastes was a rounded, arid cliff, crouching on the moving sands: Tombelaine.

Farther away, near the bluish line of the ocean, were other rocks, partly submerged, and the eye, following the horizon, discovered to the right the vast expanse of verdant Normandy. It looked as if entire nature were offering herself to the gaze of man in all her splendor, power, freshness and grace; and the eye wandered from the green forests and pastures, to the rocky mountain that squatted alone, like some gothic monster, upon the sands.

The strange delight that had often taken possession of Mariolle, when confronted by the surprises that unexplored lands hold for the tourist, came over him so suddenly, before this wonderful picture, that he stood rooted to the spot absolutely forgetful of his passion. But at the sound of a distant bell, he turned around, his brain in a turmoil at the thought of their meeting. The garden was almost deserted. The English children had gone away. Only the three old men were still walking slowly up and down the paths. She would arrive in a very short while. He would see her advance toward him along one of the roads that led to this beautiful terrace. He would recognize her form and her smile and he would hear her voice. What happi-

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ness! What bliss! He felt as if she were quite near, though invisible, her thoughts directed to him and her heart going out to him.

All at once he uttered a slight exclamation of joy. A blue sunshade appeared above a clump of bushes in the distance. No doubt it was she. A little boy rolling a hoop emerged from one of the alleys followed by two ladies — he recognized her immediately — and two men: her father and a stranger. She was dressed in pale blue like a Summer sky. Ah! he recognized her from afar, though still unable to distinguish her features; he did not dare step forward to meet her, because he knew he would blush and stammer and be unable to explain the coincidence to M. de Pradon.

He started in their direction, however, with his field-glass held to his eyes, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the scenery. It was she who called to him without even taking the trouble to feign astonishment.

"How do you do, monsieur Mariolle," she cried. "Isn't this beautiful?"

Slightly flustered by her direct tone, he cast about for some fitting remark.

"Ah! What luck to have met you *here,* madame! I have always wanted to explore this delightful region."

"And you chose the time when I am here," she replied with a smile. "That is very nice of you."

Then she presented him.

"A dear friend of mine, M. Mariolle; my aunt, Mme. Valsaci; my uncle, who builds bridges."

After these greetings, M. de Pradon and Mariolle shook hands coldly and the walk was resumed.

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She placed him between herself and her aunt, after throwing him a rapid glance, one of those glances that spell surrender.

"What do you think of the place?" she inquired.

"I think I have never seen anything more beautiful," he replied.

"Ah! had you spent several days here, as I have," she continued, "you would know how it captivates one. It is impossible to express its charm. The coming and going of the breakers on the beach, the restless water which rolls over the sands twice a day so fast that a galloping horse could not flee before it, the extraordinary spectacle the sky gives us free, why, I tell you, it makes me feel wonderfully. I am quite beside myself. Isn't that so, Aunt?"

Mme. Valsaci, an elderly, distinguished woman, with gray hair, the respected wife of the chief engineer, acknowledged that she had never before seen her niece in such a state of enthusiasm. Then after a pause, she added:

"It is not very surprising, though, when one thinks that she has only seen and admired stage settings."

"But," replied Mme. de Burne, "I go to Trouville and to Dieppe every year."

The older woman laughed:

"One goes to Trouville and to Dieppe to meet one's friends. The Ocean is only there to bathe and rendezvous."

She said it in a very simple manner and perhaps without maliciousness.

They started toward the terrace which always attracted visitors. The setting sun seemed to spread a golden veil behind the tall Abbey which loomed black

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against the glorious sky. But Mariolle had eyes only for the blonde apparition at his side, enveloped in a cloud of filmy blue. Never had she appeared so attractive, so fascinating. She was changed, although he could not tell how and seemed to cast about her a delightful sensation of freshness that emanated from her skin, her eyes, her hair, and her soul, too. "It must be this wonderful place," he thought, and understood and loved her better than ever before.

They walked along silently, because he was at loss for words, and the contact of her dress and arm, the language of their eyes, annihilated him so completely that he felt as if this woman had killed his personality, absorbed his entity so that he was little more than a living desire, appeal and adoration. She had suppressed his individuality as one burns a letter.

She did not fail to perceive the absolute victory she had gained; and moved by her triumph and the wonderful influence of the surroundings, she murmured with downcast eyes:

"I am very glad to see you!"

She immediately added:

"How long are you going to be here?"

"Two days," he answered, "if to-day can be taken into account."

Then he turned to the aunt and remarked:

"Would Mme. Valsaci do me the honor of consenting to spend a day at Mont Saint-Michel, with her husband?"

Mme. de Burne answered for her relatives:

"I will not permit them to refuse," she said, "as we have had the luck to meet you here."

Mme. Valsaci added:

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"We shall be delighted, monsieur, on the condition that you dine with us this evening."

He bowed his acceptance.

A sudden delirious joy came over him, similar to the joy that one feels when what one has most ardently desired is about to take place. What had he obtained? What new circumstance had entered his life? None, and yet he felt overwhelmed by the happiness of a mysterious presentiment. They remained on the terrace until the sun went down in order to enjoy to the last the wonderful spectacle of the dark Mount looming against the brilliant sky.

Then they set out toward the Valsaci's villa, that was built on the outskirts of the town, in the center of a fine garden overlooking the bay.

Wishing to be discreet, and secretly dismayed by the cold and almost hostile manner of M. de Pradon, Mariolle soon took leave.

When he raised Mme. de Burne's hand to his lips, she murmured twice in a peculiar tone: "Until tomorrow."

As soon as he had gone, M. and Mme. Valsaci, who had long ago acquired provincial habits, suggested that they should all retire for the night.

"Very well," said Mme. de Burne, "but I am going to take a little walk in the garden."

"I will go with you, said her father." They went out together and began to walk up and down the moonlit alleys of the garden. After a long silence M. de Pradon turned to his daughter.

"My dear child," he said and his voice was lowered almost to a whisper, "I hope you will admit that I have never bothered you with advice."

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She felt what was coming and prepared for the attack.

"I beg your pardon, papa," she replied, "you have given me some."

"Have I?"

"Yes."

"Some advice concerning your mode of life?"

"Yes, and some very bad advice. And I have firmly resolved in case you should offer any more, never to follow it."

"What did I advise you to do?"

"To marry M. de Burne. It proved that you lacked insight and judgment, and knowledge of mankind in general and of your daughter in particular."

He was silent for a moment, feeling astonished and embarrassed, then he slowly said:

"Yes, I made a mistake that time. But I am sure that I am not mistaken in the parental advice I am going to offer you now."

"Well, let me hear it. I will take what I need of it."

"You are compromising yourself."

She laughed a little constrainedly.

"With M. Mariolle, I suppose," she said.

"Yes, with M. Mariolle," he replied.

"You forget," she continued, "that I have already compromised myself with M. Georges de Maltry, with M. Massival, with M. Gaston de Lamarthe, and a dozen others, of whom you were jealous, for I can't have a nice and devoted friend without the whole flock becoming furious, you the very first, you whom Nature bestowed upon me to enact the rôle of father and general manager."

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"No, no," he replied quickly, "you have never compromised yourself with anyone. On the contrary, you have always displayed a great deal of tact in the handling of your friends."

"My dear papa," she continued boldly, "I am no longer a little girl, and I promise you that I will no more compromise myself with M. Mariolle, than with the others; do not fear. I'll admit, however, that I asked him to come here. I think he is a delightful, intelligent man, and much less selfish than the others. That was also your opinion, until the day you thought you discovered that I showed a slight preference for him! Oh! you are not as clever as you think! I know you, too, and I could tell you lots of things if I wanted to. So, as I like M. Mariolle very well, I thought it would be nice to take this little trip together and that it would be silly, when there is absolutely no danger, to deprive oneself of anything amusing. And I run no risk of being compromised when you are with me."

She was frankly laughing by this time, for she felt that each word struck home, and that she had silenced him by her references to his jealousy which she had discovered long ago and which amused a secret side of her coquetry.

M. de Pradon remained silent. He was irritated and embarrassed, feeling instinctively that, under his paternal solicitude, she knew lurked a mysterious rancor the origin of which he did not care to probe.

She spoke at last.

"Do not fear. It is quite natural to take a trip to Mont Saint-Michel at this time of the year, with my uncle, my aunt, you, my father, and a friend. Besides, nobody will know it. And if anybody should hear of

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it, they can't say a word about it. When we return to Paris, I will make this friend go back to his accustomed place."

"Very well," replied M. de Pradon; "let us act as if I had not mentioned it."

They walked on. After a while M. de Pradon said:

"Shall we go in? I am tired and want to go to bed."

"No, I am going to stay out a little longer. The night is so beautiful."

"Do not go too far from the house," he muttered. "One never knows whom one may meet."

"Oh, I'll stay within earshot."

"Well then, good-night, my child." He imprinted a rapid kiss on her brow and went into the house.

She walked to a little rustic bench beneath an oak tree. The night was warm, filled with the pungent odor of the fields and the sea, and a slight mist hovered over the bay and veiled the full moon. The mist glided like pale smoke over the downs which were now surely covered by the rising tide.

Michèle de Burne, her hands clasping her knees, her eyes gazing into space, was trying to fathom the mists of her soul, as impenetrable and pale as those of the downs.

How many times in Paris, sitting in front of her looking-glass, had she asked herself these questions: What do I care for? What do I desire? What do I hope for? What do I want? What am I?

Aside from the pleasure of being herself, and the desire to please, which she really keenly enjoyed, she had never, in all her life, felt anything in her heart but rapidly extinguished curiosity. She knew herself, for

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the habit of gazing at, and studying her form and features, had also brought to her a knowledge of her soul. Until now she had been resigned to the fact that she could only feel the vaguest kind of interest in things that moved other people. And still, every time that she had felt within herself a budding affection for someone, every time a rival sought to carry off a man for whom she cared, and, rousing her feminine instincts, had sent a thrill of attachment through her veins, she had experienced in these false alarms an emotion far greater than the mere pleasure of success. But it never lasted. Why? She grew tired, or disgusted; perhaps her vision was too clear. Everything about a man that attracted her in the beginning, everything that had agitated, moved and captivated her, soon appeared old, commonplace and tiresome. They were all too much alike, without ever being exactly similar; and not one had yet appeared gifted with the nature and qualities necessary to thoroughly awaken her.

Why was it thus? Was it their fault, or did the fault belong to her? Did they lack what she was looking for, or did she lack the capacity to love? Does one love because one happens to meet a being who seems to have been created for you, or does one love simply because one was born with the faculty to love? Sometimes, she believed that the hearts of people had arms like their bodies, to draw and to hold, to press and to clasp, and that her own heart was armless; it only had eyes.

One often heard of men, of superior men, falling desperately in love with unworthy women, women without value, wit or even beauty? How, and why? By what mystery? After all, the crisis was not due to a

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providential dispensation, but only to a germ people carried within themselves and which suddenly developed. She had listened to confidences, had surprised secrets and had even seen, with her own eyes, the wonderful transfiguration that comes over a being when love blossoms in his soul. She had reflected a great deal upon these things.

In society, in the continual round of calls and teas and gossip, she had several times discovered with astonished and incredulous envy, women and men in whom something wonderful had undoubtedly taken place. It did not manifest itself flagrantly, openly, but the restless intuition of her nature felt and divined it. In their smile and in their eyes especially, something inexpressibly happy could be noticed, a bliss of the soul that communicated itself to the flesh.

Without knowing why, these people angered her. Lovers always had annoyed her; and she inwardly classed as contempt the deep and dull irritation that people who really loved excited within her. She could recognize them with wonderful intuition and promptness. Often had she scented and unveiled "liaisons" before society had even suspected their existence.

When she thought of the tender happiness which the existence of another being sometimes produces in us, she felt incapable of ever experiencing it. And yet, how many times, tired of everything and dreaming of unattainable things, tormented by the constant desire for change and novelty which was perhaps only a vague and undefined longing for affection, had she wished that she might meet a man who would be able to bring about, if only for a little while, the intoxicating excitement of body and soul which must lend such an ecstatic

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charm to existence! Not only had she desired to meet such a man, but she had even looked for him, with her indolent activity that did not linger long over anything. All her budding infatuations for men considered superior, men who had dazzled her a little while, had ended in disappointment and disillusion. She expected too much from their natures and their characters, their delicacies and qualities. With each one she had been compelled to realize that the faults of great men are often more prominent than their accomplishments, that talent is a special gift, like strong eyes or a good stomach, and that it has no special reference or relation to the other personal qualifications of a man, which render friendship desirable and pleasant.

But, since she had met Mariolle, something else attached her to him. However, did she love him, truly love him? Without a reputation, without a well-known name, he had won her by his affection, his tenderness, his intellect and all the real and tangible attractions of his person. He had won her, for she thought of him continually, constantly desired his presence and no other human being was so necessary, agreeable and congenial to her. Was that what is termed love?

She did not feel that flame in her soul which she expected, but she experienced for the first time a sincere wish to be more to this man than a mere friend. Did she love him? Does love mean that a man must appear surrounded by a halo, must be different and superior to all others, and filled with exceptional attractions, or does it simply mean that you merely must like him very much and be unable to get along without him?

In the latter case, she loved him, or very nearly loved him. After reflecting deeply on the matter, she

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was able to say to herself: "Yes, I love him, but I lack enthusiasm; it's the fault of my disposition."

Yet, had she not felt some enthusiasm, a little while ago, when she saw him coming toward her in the garden at Avranches? For the first time in her life she had experienced that inexpressible something which impels us toward another being; she had felt a genuine pleasure in having him near her, devoured with love, while they watched the sun set behind the Mont Saint-Michel like in a fairy story. Was not love a sort of legend, too, that some believed in and others ended by believing in, because they thought about it so much? Would she end by believing in it, too? She had felt a peculiar and sensuous desire to put her head on this man's shoulder, to be close to him, to seek the complete communion of souls which can never be found, and to give him what one offers in vain and always keeps back; the inner chamber of her soul.

Yes, she had felt attracted to this man and still felt so. It would be sufficient, perhaps, to abandon herself to the feeling, in order to have it grow into infatuation. She resisted and reasoned too much, she told herself. Would it not be lovely, to walk with him some night like this along the banks of the river, and, as a reward for all his passion, to offer him her lips now and then?

A window was thrown open in the villa. She turned her head. It was her father trying to discover her in the dark.

"Haven't you gone to bed, yet?" she called to him.

"If you don't come in you will catch cold," he replied.

She arose and re-entered the house. Then, when she

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had reached her own room, she drew back the curtains and looked at the bay where the mist that had gathered had grown paler under the moonlight and she felt as if the mist in her heart had also melted away under the warmth of a new tenderness.

She slept well and had to be awakened by the maid the next morning, for they were to start early for Mont Saint-Michel to be in time for luncheon.

A large carriage came for them. Hearing the wheels on the gravel, she leaned out of the window, and instantly encountered André Mariolle's eyes directed toward her. Her heart beat wildly against her breast. She noted with surprise and a feeling of oppression, the strange and novel sensation of the organ that sends the blood bounding through one's veins at the sight of some dear one. As on the previous evening, she asked herself: "Am I going to love him?"

Then, when she went down and saw how depressed, how desperately love-sick he was, she felt a genuine longing to open her arms and yield her lips to him.

They exchanged a look that made him grow pale with happiness.

The carriage started. It was a beautiful Summer morning, filled with the voices of birds and the youth of the year. After driving down the hill, and crossing the river, they turned into a badly kept road that led through some small villages. After a long silence, Mme. de Burne began to tease her uncle about the condition of the road; it was sufficient to break the ice and the gayety that seemed to hover in the atmosphere communicated itself to the little party.

As they emerged from a hamlet, the beach suddenly re-appeared, no longer tawny as on the previous after-

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noon, but covered with a sheet of shining water that hid everything, even the road, according to what the coachman told them.

Then, for one hour, the horses were put on a walk to give the tide time to return to the Ocean.

The walls of oak and elm-trees which surrounded the farms they passed, constantly hid from view the outline of the Abbey. Here and there, they caught a glimpse of it through the trees, looming larger and closer as they proceeded. The hot sun threw ruddy tints on the granite cathedral standing on its pedestal of rock.

Michéle de Burne and André Mariolle gazed at it and then at one another, mingling the emotion of their hearts with the poetry of the beautiful July morning.

The conversation was general and friendly. Mme. Valsaci told tragic stories of accidents and described some dramas of the treacherous sand that draws men to their death. M. Valsaci took up the defense of the bank that many artists had attacked, and lauded its advantages in having established constant communication with the Mount. Suddenly the carriage stopped. The Ocean had submerged the road. It was nothing to speak of, only a thin sheet of water on the stony ground, but they felt that here and there ditches might be encountered, and that it would be safer to wait.

"Oh! it recedes quickly," said M. Valsaci, and he pointed to the road where the thin sheet of water was already leaving the stones, drawn away by some powerful and mysterious force. They got out in order to examine at close range this mysterious departure of the water, and followed it step by step. Already green spots were appearing here and there on the beach, enlarging, spreading, forming islands. Soon the islands

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grew to look like little continents separated by tiny oceans; and then, the whole beach was suddenly cleared and the tide rushed out toward the sea.

It looked like a silver veil being dragged over the sand, an immense and ragged veil, that exposed the naked, greenish prairies without showing the golden sands that succeeded them.

The party had returned to the carriage and everybody was standing up in order to see the phenomenon. Although the road was nearly dry, the horses were made to walk and, as the carriage bumped over a rough place here and there, Mariolle suddenly felt Mme. de Burne's shoulder pressing against his own. At first he thought that mere chance had brought about this pressure; but she did not draw away, and each jolt of the carriage sent a thrill through the spot where her arm rested and threw him into a state of almost uncontrollable excitement. He did not dare look at her; he felt paralyzed with joy at this unexpected familiarity and his thoughts were in a turmoil similar to those of a drunken man. "Is it possible? Can it be possible? Are we both losing our heads?"

Soon the horses started to trot and the party resumed their seats. Then Mariolle experienced a sudden, imperious and strange desire to be amiable to M. de Pradon and began to converse with him, displaying a flattering interest in the older man's opinions. Nearly as susceptible to flattery as his daughter, M. de Pradon permitted himself to be captivated and soon his face was wreathed in smiles.

They had reached the sand bank and were bound for the Mount that loomed at the end of the straight road. The little river of Pontorson flowed on the left; on the

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right, pastures covered with short grass took the place of sweating, salty downs.

The great cathedral loomed against the blue sky, its top distinctly outlined in every detail with its spires and turrets, grinning gargoyles, and hideous gothic monsters which the superstitious faith of our ancestors attached to their sanctuaries.

It was nearly one o'clock when the party reached the hotel, where luncheon had been ordered in advance. The landlady was not ready, however, and they had to wait again. So they sat down to their meal rather late in the afternoon and consequently with a hearty appetite. Champagne was ordered and the cold, sparkling liquid immediately put life into the party.

Everybody felt comfortable and satisfied and two hearts were very close to happiness. Toward the end of the meal, when the animation produced by the wine and the pleasure of congenial company had developed in them a sensation of physical well-being which is the direct result of a good dinner and which fills us with indulgence for everything and everybody, Mariolle remarked:

"Supposing we remain here until to-morrow? It would be fine to see the Mount by moonlight and to have dinner together!"

Mme. de Burne accepted at once; and the two men also consented. Mme. Valsaci, only, appeared to hesitate on account of the little son she had left at home, but her husband calmed her by assuring her that she had left him in this way many times before. He even wrote out a telegram with instructions and sent it at once to the governess. He considered Mariolle delightful, for had he not approved of the bank and

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judged it far less detrimental to the appearance of the Mount than was generally admitted?

They rose from the table and started out immediately to visit the cathedral, choosing the road leading past the ramparts. The city, composed of clusters of mediæval houses built all over the enormous block of granite which is topped by the Abbey, is separated from the beach by a high embattled wall. This wall runs along the old part of the town and forms angles, terraces, and observation towers that are as so many surprises to the eye which, at each new turn, discovers a vast expanse of the immense horizon.

They scarcely spoke as they climbed the serpentine road and they gazed with ever renewed awe at the amazing monument. Above their heads rose a wonderful tangle of spires, of stone flowers and arches curving from one tower to the other, a huge and weird architectural lace-work from which sprang a threatening and fantastic army of gargoyles with animal faces. Between the Abbey and the Ocean, a wild and steep incline called the Forest, because it was covered with ancient trees, began where the houses ended, spreading a deep green patch on the tawny beach. Mme. de Burne and Mariolle, who were walking in front of the others, stopped a moment to gaze at the picture. She clung to his arm with a sensation of delight that she had never felt before. Lightly she climbed with him toward this dream tower, ready to climb higher and higher if he so willed, even toward a different goal. She wished that the steep road would never end, for she felt as absolutely contented as she knew she ever could feel.

She murmured:

"Mon Dieu! how beautiful it is!"

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Looking at her, he replied:

"I can think of nothing but you."

"I am not very poetical," she answered with a smile, "and yet, I find this place so beautiful that I feel sincerely moved."

"I love you madly," he stammered.

He felt a slight pressure of her hand on his arm, and silently they continued the ascent.

A guardian was waiting for them at the doors of the Abbey. They walked up the magnificent staircase that leads to the armory. Then they visited everything, all the galleries, courtyards, and dungeons of this marvelous monastery. They admired everything, from the crypt of massive stone pillars which supports the whole choir of the church above, to the smallest detail of the three gothic monuments poised one on top of the other and which make of Mont Saint-Michel the most extraordinary religious and military masterpiece of the middle ages.

When they reached the cloister, they stopped in amazement before the great square yard enclosed with the lightest, most charming and graceful colonnade of all the monasteries in existence. Two rows of slender columns surmounted by beautiful capitals carry around the four galleries an uninterrupted garland of gothic ornaments and flowers, of infinite variety, a simple and elegant conception of the artists of old, whose thoughts and dreams were thus chiseled into the stone.

Michéle de Burne and André Mariolle walked around the galleries arm in arm, while the rest of the party, tired out, admired from the doorway.

"Dieu! how pretty this is," she exclaimed and paused in her walk.

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"I don't know where I am," he rejoined, "nor where I live, nor what I am looking at. I only know that you are near me."

She looked at him searchingly for a moment, smiled and murmured:

"André!"

He understood that she had surrendered. They spoke no more after this and the inspection of the monastery was resumed.

They walked around a long time gazing at everything with unseeing eyes, but when they reached the staircase that is enclosed in an arch curving between two turrets, they could not help but admire the wonder of its architecture. They were again seized with surprise when they arrived at the "Chemin des Fous" a dizzy stone path without a railing that runs around the top of the last tower.

"Are people allowed to go up there?" she inquired.

"It is not allowed," replied the guardian.

She drew a gold coin from her purse; the man hesitated. The whole family, awed by the perilousness of the undertaking, frantically opposed her whim.

But she calmly turned to Mariolle:

"You would not mind it, would you?" she said.

"I have been in more dangerous ascents than this," he replied laughingly.

And without paying the slightest attention to the rest of the party, they started.

He went first, picking his way carefully along the narrow ledge, and she followed, eyes cast down, grazing the wall, so as not to see the yawning abyss below. She was moved now, quaking with fear; and she clung tightly to the hand he held out to her; but she felt that

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here was strength, that this man was sure of his brain and of his feet, and, inwardly happy, in spite of her terror, she mused: "Here at last is a true man." They were standing alone in space, poised as high in the air as those white-winged gulls that fly back and forth over the sea.

Mariolle felt a tremor pass through her.

"Do you feel dizzy?" he asked.

"Yes, a little," she replied, "but I am not afraid with you."

He stepped close to her and putting his arm about her waist, held her firmly, so that she would feel secure enough to gaze around.

He was almost carrying her and she abandoned herself to his protecting arms with a sensation of joy and gratitude for not having spoiled their bird-like course by demonstrations of tenderness.

When they joined the others, who were wild with anxiety, M. de Pradon could not help saying in an exasperated tone:

"Goodness, Michéle, what a silly thing to do!"

"Not at all," she replied with conviction. "Nothing is silly, that is successful, papa."

He shrugged his shoulders and they started on the return trip. They stopped a little while at the "loge" of the door-keeper to purchase some views and when they reached the hotel, it was nearly dinner time. The landlady urged a short walk on the beach, to view the Mount from that point, which showed it to its best advantage, she said.

Although they were very tired, they started off again and walked around the ramparts, keeping a safe distance from the downs which, under their appearance of

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safety, were so treacherous, that one could sink to the knees into the yellow sand before realizing that there was any danger.

From this point the Abbey, losing its monastic character, took on the aspect of a threatening feudal castle with its high embattled walls and picturesque turrets. But Mariolle and Mme. de Burne paid little attention to these things. Their thoughts were centered on each other; they were caught in the snare they had spread and were prisoners in the rushing maelstrom of their passion.

When they sat down to dinner, they seemed to regain their lost poise and noticed that, after all, they were very hungry.

They remained at the table quite a while, and when dinner was over, the moonlight walk was forgotten and they settled down to a cozy evening. Nobody cared to go out and no reference was made to a walk. The big moon could, for all they cared, throw its poetic light over the beach and the incoming tide; she could illumine the winding ramparts of the Mount, and all the wonderful architectural fancies of the Abbey; they had no desire to go and see.

It was not quite ten o'clock when Mme. Valsaci, prostrated from the exertions of the day, declared she wished to retire. Her announcement was met without the slightest protest. After mutual and cordial wishes for a good night's rest, each member of the party went to his rooms.

André Mariolle knew very well that he would not be able to sleep; so he lit his two candles, opened the window and gazed at the night. His whole being was faint from the torture of useless hope. He knew she

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was near, separated only by two doors, and it was almost as impossible to go to her as to stop the rising flood which was covering the beach. He felt a mad desire to cry out and his nerves were so strained that he wondered what he could do to relieve the tension and loneliness of this fruitless happiness.

Little by little, every noise in the hotel and the street, had died away. Mariolle still remained at the window, looking out at the silvery high tide, and aware only of the passing of the hours. He put off going to bed as late as possible, as if a foreboding of some providential and unimaginable occurrence had suddenly crept into his soul. Suddenly he thought he heard a hand on the lock of the door. He turned round with a start. The door opened softly and a woman entered, her head covered with a white scarf and her body wrapped in one of those loose dressing-gowns that seem to be made of snow, silk and swansdown. She carefully closed the door behind her; and then, as if she had not seen him standing paralyzed with joy in the lighted opening of the window, she walked straight to the mantel piece and blew out the candles.

II

THEY were to bid each other farewell the next morning, in front of the hotel. Mariolle was the first to come down and he waited for her to appear with a strange mixture of anxiety and happiness. What would she do? What would she be like? On what terrible or blissful adventure had he embarked himself? She could do with him what she pleased, make of him a beautified dreamer akin to an

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opium smoker, or a martyr, as he chose. He walked nervously up and down in front of the hotel, where two carriages were waiting, one for him — he was going to Saint-Malo to carry on the pretense of a trip — and an other one which was going to take M. de Pradon and his party back to Avranches.

When would he see her again? Would she shorten her visit to her uncle, or postpone her return to Paris? He dreaded her first glance and her first words; he had not seen her and they had scarcely spoken during the short meeting of the previous night. She had offered herself resolutely, yet with modest reserve, not lingering too long in his embrace; and when she left him, she only whispered: "Until to-morrow, mon ami."

André Mariolle retained from their strange and short interview the poignant disappointment of a man who has not been able to reap the whole harvest of the love he thought ripe; at the same time, he experienced an intoxicating feeling of triumph, the almost certain hope of being soon able to possess her completely.

He heard the sound of her voice and started. She was speaking in a loud tone, irritated no doubt at some whim of her father, and when she appeared on the threshold of the hotel, her lips wore the angry curl that betokened her displeasure.

Mariolle advanced to meet her; she saw him and smiled. In her eyes, grown suddenly calm, a kindly light kindled that spread over her whole countenance. Then, when she tenderly held out her hand to him, he knew that she was confirming without repentance or regret the gift she had made him the night before.

"So we are going to part company?" she said.

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"Alas! Madame, I am suffering more than I can tell."

"It will not be for long," she murmured.

And as M. de Pradon made a move to join them, she hurriedly added:

"Say that you are going to take a ten days' trip through Brittany, but don't do it."

Suddenly Mme. Valsaci rushed up and exclaimed:

"What is this your father has just been telling me? You want to leave us the day after to-morrow? Why, you were to remain until the following Monday, at least!"

A little annoyed, Mme. de Burne replied:

"Papa is very foolish to talk that way. The Ocean, as usual, has given me neuralgia, and I spoke of going away so as not to be compelled to take care of myself for a whole month afterward. But now is hardly the time to discuss these matters."

The coachman who was to drive Mariolle to the station, was anxious to get under way, so as not to miss the train for Pontorson.

"And you, when do you expect to be in Paris?" Mme. de Burne asked of Mariolle.

He hesitated a moment.

"Why, I don't exactly know," he replied. "I want to see Saint Malo, Brest, Donarnenez, the baie des Trépassés, the point of Raz, Audierne, Penmarch, the Morbihan, all the well-known places of Brittany. It will take me about . . .

After a pause filled with simulated mental calculation he exaggerated.

"Two or three weeks, at least," he finally said.

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"That's a long time," she laughed. "If I am troubled with neuralgia as I was last night, I will go back in two days."

Choked with emotion Mariolle felt like crying: "Merci!" But he contented himself with raising her hand to his lips with the fervor of a lover.

After cordial farewells to the Valsacis and M. de Pradon, whose mind seemed easier since he had heard of Mariolle's proposed trip, the latter got into his carriage and was driven to the station.

He returned to Paris without making a single stop, and thought of nothing on the way but *Her*. All night long, dozing in the train, his brain in a whirl of excitement, he lived over the occurrences of the previous night. As soon as he reached his rooms, in the silence of the den where he worked and wrote, where he almost always felt the quieting influence of his beloved books and violin, the torture of impatience that racks the souls of lovers took possession of his heart. He tried to occupy his mind, to absorb his attention, and was surprised to find that the ordinary pursuits with which he was wont to while away the time, such as playing and reading, were entirely inadequate to calm his agitation. A restless desire to move, to walk about, seemed to have entered into him, a desire communicated by the spirit to the body, and which is naught else but an instinctive and unappeasable wish to find the one who engrosses our attention.

He put on his overcoat, reached for his hat, and went out. "Where shall I go?" he mused. Then, a thought entered his mind. He would have to find a pretty, inconspicuous little nest for their rendezvous.

He set out on his quest. He investigated every

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street, every avenue, pausing to take a look at every janitor with a complaisant smile, at every apartment that showed traces of having already served a similar purpose. But his search remained fruitless, and he went home exhausted. The next morning, at nine, he started out again and finally discovered in an alley in Auteuil, at the end of a garden with three exits, a lovely little Summer-house that an upholsterer of the neighborhood undertook to furnish within two days. He picked out the hangings, some very simple lacquered furniture, and a thick carpet. The garden was kept by a baker who lived near one of the entrances. Mariolle made an arrangement with the man's wife to clean and dust the place every day. A florist of the neighborhood agreed to care for the flower-beds.

All these arrangements kept Mariolle busy until night. When he reached his rooms, the first thing he discovered was a telegram lying on his desk.

It read:

"I will be home to-morrow evening. Await instructions.

"Michéle."

He had not written her yet, fearing that, as she was going to leave Avranches, the letter might go astray. As soon as he had finished his dinner, he sat down to tell her all that was in his heart. It was a long and a difficult task, for all his expressions and ideas seemed ridiculous, inadequate and meager for such a pæan of praise and love.

The letter he received the next morning confirmed

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her return and requested him to remain invisible for a few days, so that the world would credit the story of his trip. She also asked him to meet her at ten o'clock the following morning, on the terrace of the Tuileries which overlooks the Seine.

He arrived an hour ahead of time and wandered about the great garden gazing at the people hurrying hither and thither intent on reaching their places of business. He noticed clerks, employés, working people of every description and experienced a feeling of keen delight as he thought of the stern necessity which drove these people to irksome tasks, while he, at this hour, was waiting for his mistress, a queen among women; and he felt so fortunate, so privileged, so apart from the rest of humanity, that he wanted to thank the blue heavens for his luck; in his belief Providence was nothing but alternate sunshine and rain due to *Chance,* that sly master of man's destiny.

A few minutes before ten he walked to the terrace and waited for her to appear.

"She will be late," he muttered. But a neighboring clock had just chimed out the hour, when he thought he saw her approaching in the distance, walking rapidly, like some working girl going to her daily task. He hesitated. "Was it really she?" He recognized her walk, but was amazed at her appearance, rendered quite unfamiliar by the dark, plain dress she wore. Yet she was heading straight for the terrace, as if she were accustomed to coming there.

"Tiens," thought Mariolle, "she must know this place pretty well." He watched her raise her dress and put one slender foot on the first step of the stairs leading to the terrace, then rapidly ascend the others.

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He hastened forward to meet her. She smiled up at him and said with a ring of anxiety in her voice:

"You are very imprudent. You mustn't show yourself so openly. I saw you from the rue de Rivoli. Come, we will sit on a bench behind the Orangerie. The next time you must wait for me there."

He could not refrain from asking:

"So you come here often?"

"Yes," she answered, "I like it very much; being an early riser, I often come here to walk and look at the scenery. You never meet anyone here, while the Bois is quite impossible. But don't tell my secret."

"Indeed I shall not," he laughed.

He took her hand, a little slender hand hanging loosely at her side in the folds of her gown.

"How I love you," he sighed. "I have been ill waiting for you. Did you get my letter?"

"Yes, thank you. It touched me very much."

"And so you are not angry with me?" he queried.

"Why, no. Why should I be? You are as nice as can be."

He was endeavoring to find some appropriate words with which to express his gratitude and love; but, being unable to think of any, and too much absorbed in her to retain the necessary presence of mind, he only repeated.

"I love you dearly."

"I asked you to come here," she said, "because we can see the boats and the water, but it's not like the other place; still, it isn't so bad."

They seated themselves on a bench near the stone railing that follows the river. They were quite alone and invisible. Two gardeners and three nursemaids were the only living beings on the terrace at that hour.

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On the quay at their feet, they could hear the rumbling of passing vehicles, but they could not see them. Footsteps sounded on the nearby sidewalk, beneath the high wall of the terrace, and not knowing quite what to say, they gazed at the pretty Parisian landscape that extends from the isle of Saint-Louis and the towers of Notre-Dame, to the hills of Meudon.

"It is really pretty here," she repeated. But he was suddenly seized with the remembrance of their trip to the sky, on the tower of the Abbey, and devoured with regret for the vanished emotion, he exclaimed:

"Ah! madame, do you remember our experience on the Chemin des Fous?"

"Yes," she replied. "But it frightens me when I think of it now. Dieu! How dizzy I would be if I had to do it over again! I was drunk with air and sunshine and Ocean breezes. Look, ami, how beautiful our present view is; I love Paris."

Her words surprised him a little, and a vague feeling that something she had experienced at Mont Saint-Michel had died out, swept over him. He murmured:

"What matters the place as long as I am with you?"

She pressed his hand in silence. Then, made happier through this slight pressure than he perhaps would have been made through some word of love, his heart relieved of the burden that oppressed it, his passion at last found expression.

He talked, slowly, using words that were almost solemn, and told her that he had put his life in her keeping, that she might do with it what she willed.

Grateful, yet filled with modern skepticism, a prisoner of racking Doubt, she only smiled and replied:

"Do you bind yourself like that?"

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He turned on her suddenly, and gazing into her eyes with a look that was like a touch, he slowly repeated all he had just said, only more ardently, more poetically, than before. Everything that he had already expressed in the wonderful letters he had sent her, was reiterated with such fervid sincerity, that it seemed to her as if she were floating on a cloud of incense. She felt herself caressed in her innermost being by his adoring lips, and when he ceased speaking she simply murmured:

"I too, love you dearly."

They held hands like two artless lovers roaming through a country lane, and gazed with unseeing eyes upon the tiny bateaux-monches gliding on the Seine below. They were more completely isolated in Paris, amid the vague, awful roar of the great city, than they had been at the top of the aerial tower of Mont Saint-Michel and for a few seconds they truly forgot that there was anybody in the world beside themselves.

It was she who first came back to the realization of life and the fleeting minutes.

"Shall we meet to-morrow?" she asked.

He thought a while, embarrassed at what he was about to say: "Why — yes — certainly But — aren't we going to see each other somewhere else? This place is lonely enough, it is true — yet, anybody can come here."

She hesitated.

"You are right"— She said at last. But you know you must keep away for at least a week or two, to make people believe that you have been traveling. It will be lovely and quite mysterious to meet while the world thinks you are in Brittany. But I cannot let you call on me now. So — I don't see —"

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He felt a dull flush mount to his cheeks, then he said:

"And I could not ask you to visit my rooms. Isn't there some other way, some other place?"

She appeared neither surprised nor shocked, being a woman of common sense and superior logic, entirely devoid of false modesty.

"Why, yes," she said. "Only it will require some thought."

"I have already thought it out."

"Already?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Do you know the rue des Vieux-Champs in Auteuil?"

"No."

"It runs from the rue Tournemine to the rue Jean-de-Saulge."

"Yes, and then?"

"In this street, or rather in this alley, is a garden; in this garden is a summer-house that has an entrance on both of the streets I have just mentioned."

"Yes, and then?"

"That summer-house awaits you."

She was silent for a few minutes and then asked a few questions of feminine prudence. He gave her satisfactory explanations, it seems, for she murmured, as she rose from the bench:

"Very well, I will come to-morrow."

"What time?"

"Three o'clock."

"I will wait for you behind the door at Number 7. Don't forget. When you pass the door, just knock."

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"Yes, goodby, dear, till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow. Goodby. Merci. I love you."

"Do not accompany me," she said as they remained standing by the bench. Stay here a few minutes, and then go home by the quay."

"Goodby."

"Goodby."

She walked away rapidly with such a discreet, hurried and modest air about her whole person that she resembled absolutely one of those pretty, hard-working Parisian girls who, in the morning, invade the streets of Paris on their way to business.

He jumped into a cab and instructed the driver to take him to Auteuil, being worried by the idea that everything might not be in readiness for the morrow.

But he found the Summer-house filled with workmen. The walls were hung, the carpets had been laid. A dozen people were hammering, nailing, and scrubbing. In the garden, which was large and pretty — it was a portion of a former park and contained some beautiful old trees, dense groves simulating a wood, two green arbors, two lawns and innumerable paths that wound in and out among the bushes —, the florist of the neighborhood had planted rose-trees, carnations, geraniums, reseda and a number of other plants, the growth of which can be hastened or delayed, so that they may be used at short notice to transform a wilderness into an earthly paradise.

When Mariolle had taken an inventory of these things he felt as happy as if he had gained a fresh triumph over his mistress. Having obtained a solemn promise from the upholsterer that everything would be ready the following day before noon, he departed, and

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betook himself to various shops in order to acquire the necessary bric-a-brac to complete the interior of his abode. He chose for the walls a few of the admirable photographic reproductions of the great masters that can be purchased nowadays at a small cost and selected for the mantel shelves and tables, some Deck potteries and a few of the familiar objects a woman always likes to find close at hand.

He had spent two months' income before he left the shops, but he did not regret it when he thought of how, for ten years, he had saved, not through a love of economy, but simply because his needs were few.

The next day, early in the morning, he returned to Auteuil; directed the arrival of the furniture, indicated its various places, hung the pictures, perfumed the curtains and the carpets. In the excitement under which he was laboring, he had the impression of doing the most amusing, fascinating thing he had ever done in his life. Every few minutes he glanced at his watch, to calculate how much time separated him from her arrival and he worried the workmen, by trying all sorts of different arrangements for the furniture and pictures in order to arrive at the happiest possible results.

Two hours before the designated time, he sent every one away. Then, during the slow progress of the hands around the face of his watch, in the silence of the rooms where he awaited the greatest happiness that he had ever desired, he tasted, alone with his dreams, walking from the parlor to the bedroom in an ecstasy of joy, the wildest sensation of love that he was ever to experience.

Then he stepped into the garden. The sunlight shone on the lawn through the dense foliage of the old

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She inspected the garden with eager curiosity.

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trees, and its rays fell directly on a rose-bed not far from the house. The sky itself seemed to lend a luster to their tryst. Then he took up his position behind the door, opening it from time to time to glance up and down the alley, for fear she would make a mistake.

Three o'clock arrived, announced by a dozen different factory and convent clocks. His watch in his hand, Mariolle was anxiously waiting and he started with surprise when two light knocks sounded on the wood, for he had heard no footsteps in the alley.

He opened the door. She stood before him, with shining eyes. She cast an anxious glance toward the nearest houses, but was quickly reassured; she certainly knew no one among the modest people who lived there; then she inspected the garden with eager curiosity; finally, she pulled off her gloves, pressed her hands to her lover's lips and taking his arm, drew him into the garden.

At each step she exclaimed:

"Dieu! how lovely this is! how unexpected! how attractive!"

Perceiving the rose-bed whose delicate tints were brought out by the sun that shone directly upon it, she exclaimed:

"It is fairyland, dear!"

She picked a rose, kissed it and put it in her belt. Then they entered the house; she looked so happy that he felt a desire to kneel before her, although, in his heart, he knew that she should have paid more attention to him and less to the surroundings. She gazed about her with the satisfaction of a small child to whom a new toy has been presented, appreciating the dainty installation of this tomb of her virtue without the slight-

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est hint of embarrassment. She had feared the ordinary trysting place, with its dilapidated furnishings soiled by other loves. Here, on the contrary, everything was new and fresh; the prettily furnished rooms had been arranged solely for her comfort and Mariolle certainly had spent a lot of money. Really, he was perfect.

Turning toward him, she raised both arms in a charming gesture of desire and they held each other in a close embrace, their eyes closed, their lips meeting in one of those kisses that produce the double and bewildering sensation of bliss and annihilation.

In the absolute silence of their retreat they spent three hours of happiness, face pressed against face, lips against lips, body against body, and André Mariolle knew at last a complete intoxication of the senses mingled with a complete intoxication of the soul.

Before separating they went into the garden and sat down in one of the green arbors where they could remain absolutely undetected. André, joyous and exuberant, talked to her as if she were an idol who had consented to descend from her sacred shrine for him, and she listened to him in silence with that expression of slight "ennui" he had often observed in her after a visitor had unreasonably prolonged a call. Nevertheless she was affectionate, her lips curving in a tender, slightly constrained smile, and her hand clasping his own with a pressure that was perhaps more mechanical than voluntary.

But she surely was not listening to the ardent words he poured forth, for she interrupted him in the middle of a sentence to say:

"I really must be going. I have to be at the mar-

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quise de Bratiane's at six o'clock, and I shall be awfully late."

He escorted her slowly to the door through which she had entered, kissed her and softly withdrew into the house.

As soon as she had gone, he felt that strange sensation of loneliness that creeps over a man when a woman leaves him after a rendezvous, that odd weight on the heart caused by the sound of retreating footsteps, and it seemed to him as if he were forsaken and solitary, as if he had received a stone instead of bread; and he went out into the garden and walked up and down the lonely alleys, pondering sadly on the eternal contradiction of the dream and the reality.

He stayed in the garden until night, calming himself little by little and giving his heart to her far more completely than she had yielded to his embrace; then he arose, returned to his rooms, dined without knowing what was being set before him and wrote her a long letter. The following day was a long one and the evening seemed endless. He wrote her another letter. Why hadn't she sent him a line, a word of some kind? On the morning of the second day he received a short telegram giving a rendezvous for the following afternoon at the same time. The little blue paper delivered him at once of the agony of suspense which was beginning to obsess him.

She appeared promptly, smiling and affectionate as at the previous rendezvous; and the second meeting in the little Auteuil house was exactly the same as the first. André, a little surprised and vaguely disappointed at first not to feel between them the ecstasy of passion which he had expected, yet more sensually captivated

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than ever, slowly forgot the dream of the possession desired in the slightly different enjoyment of the possession granted. He was attaching himself to Michéle through their caresses, dangerous ties, the strongest of all, the only ones from which a man cannot entirely free himself, after they have once obtained a hold upon his flesh.

Three weeks flew by swiftly, happily! It seemed to André that this life would continue forever, that he would always remain as he was, dead to the world, living only for Her, and in his impulsive and artistic mind, constantly tormented by the *unattainable,* rose the vision of a happy, secret life in which she was *all* and the rest of the world nothing.

She visited the little house every three days, attracted, as it were, as much by the charm of the surroundings, by the novelty of the situation, as by the growing and idolizing devotion of her lover.

Then, one day, she said:

"Now, dear friend, you must show yourself again. Come to see me to-morrow afternoon. I have announced that you are in Paris."

Her words depressed him.

"Oh! why so soon?" he asked.

"Because," she replied, "if people by chance should hear that you have been in Paris right along, your presence would be too hard to explain not to give rise to suspicion."

He realized that she was right and promised to appear the following day. Then he inquired:

"Are you going to receive to-morrow?"

"Yes," she replied. "I am even going to have quite a little festivity."

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She laughed with delight.

"I have induced Massival, with a great deal of trouble, to consent to play his "*Dido*" that no one has heard yet. It is the love-poem of antiquity. Mme. de Bratiane, who considers herself sole proprietor of Massival, is simply wild. She will be there, too, because she is to sing. Wasn't it clever of me?"

"Are many people coming?" asked Mariolle.

"Oh! no, only a few intimate friends. You know all of them."

"Must I really come?" he pleaded. "I am so happy in my solitude."

"Why, certainly, mon ami. Don't you understand that I would rather have you than anyone else?"

His heart leaped.

"Thank you," he said. "I shall come."

III

"BONJOUR, cher monsieur."

Mariolle noticed that it was no longer the "cher ami" of Auteuil and her hand was quickly withdrawn from his clasp, as she turned to greet other guests. He entered the drawing-room while Mme. de Burne went forward to meet the beautiful Mme. Le Prieur, whose bold "décolletahes" and pretensions to classical beauty, had earned for her the slightly sarcastic nickname of "the goddess." She was the wife of a member of the "Institut," section of "Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres."

"Ah! Mariolle," exclaimed Lamarthe, "where have you been, mon cher? We thought you were dead."

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"I have just returned from a trip to Brittany."

And he was beginning to relate his impressions, when he was suddenly interrupted by the novelist.

"Do you know the baronne de Frémines?" he inquired.

"No, only by sight," said Mariolle; "but I've heard a good deal about her. They say she is very peculiar."

"She is the queen of unbalanced women, but she has a flavor of up-to-dateness that is delightful. Come with me and I'll introduce you."

Grasping Mariolle's arm, he drew him toward a young woman who looked like a doll, a pale and lovely little doll, invented and created by the devil himself for the damnation of big, bearded children! Her eyes were almond-shaped, long, narrow and slanting, like the eyes of a Chinese woman; their blue pupils moved slowly between half-closed lids that rarely opened wide, mysterious lids that were made to veil the mystery of this extraordinary little creature. Her very blonde hair shone with silvery lights and her little mouth, with its firm, narrow lips seemed delicately chiseled out of pink coral. The voice that issued from those lips had the sound of crystal, and the unexpected ideas, funny and malicious at the same time, the cold, corrupting fascination of this neurasthenic child-woman gave rise to violent passions among her followers. She was known to all Paris as the most eccentric of real society women and also the most witty; but nobody knew exactly what she really was or what she did. She generally ruled the men with unquestioned power. Her husband too, was rather puzzling. Very affable and courtly, he seemed unaware of his wife's conduct.

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Was he blind, indifferent or complaisant? Perhaps there was nothing to see, after all, and her eccentricities amused him, like the rest of the world. Rumors of every description were current about them. Some people even insinuated that he benefited by his wife's mode of life.

Between the baronne and Mme. de Burne there existed a magnetic attraction and fierce jealousy. Periods of delightful intimacy were followed by periods of furious hatred. They liked each other, and feared each other. much the same as two professional duelists who appreciate their mutual ability and wish to demonstrate it at each other's expense. Just now it was the baronne's turn to triumph; she had gained a victory, a very great victory. She had won Lamarthe, had dragged him from her rival, and enlisted him ostensibly in the ranks of her admirers. The novelist seemed captivated, puzzled, charmed and astounded by all he had discovered in this strange little creature and he could not refrain from talking about her to every one he met, a circumstance which was giving rise to a good deal of gossip.

As he was about to introduce Mariolle, he saw that Mme. de Burne was looking at them from the end of the drawing-room; he smiled and whispered in André's ear:

"Just look at the 'Queen'; she seems annoyed."

Mariolle glanced in Mme. de Burne's direction, but she had turned to greet Massival who had just entered the room.

He was immediately followed by the marquise de Bratiane, a fact that made Lamarthe remark:

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"Tiens! we shall only get the second hearing of '*Dido*'; the first one probably took place in the carriage of the marquise."

Mme. de Frémines added:

"Our friend de Burne's collection is really losing its most valuable jewels."

A sort of angry hatred leaped into Mariolle's eyes at these words, and a sudden irritation against all these people and their ideas, their tastes, their futile inclinations and silly pleasures, took possession of him. Taking advantage of the moment when Lamarthe leaned over and whispered something in the baronne's ear, he turned on his heel and walked away.

The beautiful Mme. Le Prieur was standing alone, and he went up and spoke to her. According to Lamarthe, this woman represented the old-fashioned school in this ultra-modern set. Young, tall and good-looking, with regular features and chestnut hair with here and there a reddish gleam in its heavy coils, amiable, fascinating through her very calmness and poise, Mme. Le Prieur had determined partisans whom she was careful not to expose to dangerous rivals. Her house was known for its simplicity and cosiness and her friends united in lauding her husband's qualities.

Mariolle and Mme. Le Prieur began to talk. She liked him, for she knew he was a clever man and, although he was not well-known, was perhaps a great deal nicer than the others.

Some belated guests now entered the drawing-room. Fresnel, warm and puffing, mopping his moist, shining brow, the fashionable philosopher Georges de Maltry, the baron de Gravil and the comte de Marantin. M. de Pradon assisted his daughter in receiving the

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guests. He was very gracious to Mariolle, but the latter paid no attention to him, his whole thought concentrated on *Her* who was going from one guest to the other, radiantly fulfilling her rôle of hostess. Twice she had, it is true, thrown him a glance that seemed to say: "I am thinking of you," but it was such a brief glance that he had perhaps misconstrued its meaning. And then, he could not ignore that Lamarthe's devotion to the baronne de Frémines irritated Mme. de Burne. "It is only feminine jealousy," he thought, "the jealousy of a woman whose toy some other woman is trying to take away. Still, it made him suffer; he suffered especially, because he noted that every now and then she would glance covertly toward the couple and that she did not seem to care in the least that he and Mme. Le Prieur were together. She was sure of him, while the other man, she knew, was breaking his bond. But what then, could their love be to her, their love that had just reached its fulfillment and which, in Mariolle, had killed every other interest?

M. de Pradon begged for silence and Massival opened the piano. Mme. de Bratiane, removing her gloves, for she was to sing the rôle of "*Dido*" was taking up her position near the composer, when the door was thrown open, and a young man was ushered into the salon.

He was tall, slight, with curly blonde hair and short whiskers, and carried himself with the distinction of an aristocrat. All eyes were centered on the new arrival and even Mme. Le Prieur appeared excited.

"Who is it?" asked Mariolle.

"Why, don't you know him?"

"No."

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"It's comte Rodolphe de Bernhaus."

"Ah! the one who had a duel with Sigismond Fabre."

"Yes."

That duel had created a sensation. The comte de Bernhaus, attaché of the Austrian embassy, a diplomat with a great future, a sort of fashionable Bismarck, it was said, having overheard at an official entertainment a derogatory remark about his empress, challenged the man who had uttered it, a well-known fencer, and killed him in a duel, the next day. After the occurrence, which had brought him a good deal of notoriety, the comte de Bernhaus acquired a sudden celebrity á la Sarah Bernhardt, with this difference that his name was surrounded by a halo of poetical chivalry. He was a charming man, of excellent family and possessed many social talents. Lamarthe called him: "the tamer of our beautiful wild animals."

He took a seat by Mme. de Burne and Massival preluded.

Almost everyone changed his seat and drew nearer so as to be able to see the singer and to hear every note. Lamarthe sank into a chair next to Mariolle.

A great silence filled with expectation, respect and attention fell over the assembled guests. The composer began with a slow succession of notes resembling a musical recital; there were pauses and slow phrases, some languishing and others nervous, but of all of great originality. Mariolle's thoughts were wandering. In his mind he beheld a woman, the queen of Carthage, in all the strength of her youth and beauty, walking slowly on a deserted beach. He knew that she was suffering that she carried a great sorrow in her breast; and he

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gazed at Mme. de Bratiane. Motionless and pale under her heavy coils of black hair, which seemed to have been dipped in night, the Italian, her eyes staring at some invisible object, waited. In her energetic, harsh face, with the dusky brows and black eyes, in her whole swarthy being, there was something startling, something akin to the latent thunderstorm one detects in a threatening sky.

Massival, his head swaying lightly from side to side, continued to relate on the sonorous ivory keys the tragic tale of Dido's love.

Suddenly, a thrill passed through the singer; she opened her lips and an endless, distracting wail of agony broke from them. It was not one of those tragic clamors of despair that professional singers accompany by dramatic gestures, nor yet one of those beautiful cries of love that thrill an entire audience and bring down the house, but an inexpressible wail, born of the flesh and not of the soul, uttered like the agonized plaint of a crushed beast: the cry of the betrayed female animal. She paused and the composer continued with more animation and passion this time, the story of the miserable queen whom an adored lover betrayed.

Then, once more, the voice of the singer was heard. She was speaking, now, telling the unbearable agony of her heart, the unquenchable thirst for her lover's embrace, the torture of knowing that *He* was gone for ever.

Her full, passionate voice stirred the hearts of her audience. She seemed to feel her part or, at least, to be capable of loving with a furious ardor, this dark Italian woman, with inky black hair. When she ceased singing, her eyes were full of tears, which she slowly

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wiped away. Lamarthe leaned toward Mariolle and trembling with artistic feeling said to him:

"Dieu! How beautiful she is, mon cher! She is a true woman, the only one present."

Then, after a short pause, he added:

"Indeed, who knows? Perhaps it's only the illusion of the music, for nothing exists but illusion! But what an art that can produce such illusion, and any illusion for that matter."

There was a pause between the first and second part of the musical poem and everyone gathered around the composer and his interpreter. Lamarthe was especially profuse in his praise, and was really sincere, for he was a man capable of feeling and appreciating beauty in all its varied expressions. The way he complimented Mme. de Bratiane and told her how she had made him feel, was so flattering, that a slight blush rose to her cheeks, while the other women guests who overheard his remarks were annoyed. Perhaps he was not unaware of the effect he produced. When he turned to go back to his seat, he saw comte Rodolphe de Bernhaus approach Mme. de Frémines. She looked delighted and began talking to him in a confidential way. Mariolle, more and more gloomy, was standing near the door. The novelist went up to him. Fresnel, Georges de Maltry, the baron de Gravil and the comte de Marantin surrounded Mme. de Burne who was pouring tea. She appeared enclosed in a crown of admirers. Lamarthe sarcastically commented upon the fact to his friend, and added:

"A crown without jewels, though, and I am sure that she would give all these paste stones for the one diamond she lacks."

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"What diamond is that?" inquired Mariolle.

"Why, Bernhaus, of course, the handsome, irresistible, matchless Bernhaus. The one for whom this fête has been given, for whom our friend de Burne accomplished the miracle of having Massival play his Florentine *Dido*."

André, though still incredulous, felt a nameless suffering rush over him.

"Has she known him a long time?" he asked.

"Oh! no. Ten days at the most. But she certainly exerted herself in that brief period, used all her wonderful tactics. You would have laughed heartily had you been here."

"Ah! and why, if you please?"

"She met him for the first time at Mme. de Frémines. I was dining there that night. Bernhaus is very intimate with the baronne, as you can see for yourself; and the very minute she laid eyes on him, our beautiful friend started in to capture him. And she will succeed, in fact, she is succeeding, although 'la petite Frémines' is far superior in 'rosserie,' real indifference and perversity. But our friend de Burne is wiser in her methods. She is more of a woman. I mean, more of an up-to-date woman, that is to say, possessed of those irresistible artifices that take the place of the old, natural charm. And I shouldn't say artifices either, but rather esthetics, a deep sense of feminine esthetics. All her power lies in that. She knows herself wonderfully well and she never makes a mistake in the surest way of winning a man and of showing herself to the best possible advantage."

"I think you exaggerate," protested Mariolle; "she has always been simplicity itself with me."

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"Because simplicity appeals to you; at all events, I don't mean to criticise her; I think she is superior to almost all these women. But then, they are not really women."

A succession of chords struck by Massival brought their conversation to an abrupt close, and Mme. de Bratiane sang the second part of the poem and was a Dido of truly magnificent sensual passion and despair. But not once did Lamarthe remove his eyes from Mme. de Frémines and the comte de Bernhaus.

As soon as the last notes had died away in applause, he took up the discussion with Mariolle where he had left it:

"No, they are not really women. The best of them are filled with unconscious 'rosserie.' The more I know them, the less I experience that sensation of mild intoxication that a real woman should produce. They intoxicate too, but at the same time they produce irritation, because they are adulterated. Oh! 'tis a wine that has a delicious flavor, but it cannot compare to the good old wine of old. You see, mon cher, woman was created for just two purposes, which alone can bring forth her great, true and lasting qualities: love and children. I am speaking now like M. Prudhomme. But the women of to-day are incapable of love and they don't want children; when, through negligence, they actually become mothers, the children are considered first a misfortune, and later, a burden. Really, these women are monsters."

Astonished at the violent tone of the author and the gleam of anger in his eyes, Mariolle asked:

"Then why do you spend half of your life hanging around their skirts?"

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Lamarthe replied quickly:

"Why, do you ask? Why, because they interest me; and . . . and do you want to forbid a doctor to go into hospitals to look at the patients? These women constitute my clinic."

This thought seemed to calm him and he continued:

"And then, I love them, because they are so up-to-date. In truth, I am hardly more a man than they are women. When I have become a little interested in one of them, I take pleasure in discovering and examining in her all I disapprove of, with the curiosity of a chemist who slowly poisons himself while experimenting with deadly drugs.

"In this way," he went on after a pause, "they will never really get hold of me. I play their own game as well, and perhaps better, than they do, while they reap no benefit from it. How foolish they are! All failures, nothing but delightful failures, who, when they have any feeling at all, only die of sorrow as they grow older!"

While Mariolle listened, a feeling of sadness came over him, similar to the depressing gloom that a continual rain casts over the earth. He felt that, generally speaking, the author was right, but he did not like to admit that he was absolutely so.

A little irritated at the sweeping assertions of his friend, he entered into the discussion himself, not so much to defend the women of the day as to point out modern literature as the cause of their downward tendency.

"When novelists and poets used to make them dream," he said, "women strove to find in life the equivalent of what their hearts craved. To-day, you

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writers aim to suppress every poetical and seductive flight of fancy, and to show only bare, commonplace facts. Thus, my dear fellow, no love in books, no love in real life. When you were inventors of the ideal they believed in your inventions. Now, that you are nothing but portrayers of reality, they have followed suit and believe in nothing but vulgarity."

Lamarthe, who loved literary discussions, was just launching into a professional argument, when Mme. de Burne approached.

She was really at her best that afternoon, dressed in exquisite taste, and she wore the bold, challenging expression that strife always cast over her face.

"This is what I love," she exclaimed, sinking into a chair, "to surprise two men in a discussion, when they are not talking for effect. Besides, you are the only interesting ones here. What were you talking about?"

Lamarthe, not in the least embarrassed, revealed the subject under consideration. Then he took up his argument with renewed gusto, impelled by the desire to show off, which characterizes so many people who have achieved prominence.

She took up the discussion with delight and defended the modern woman with much spirit, wit and àpropos. Several sentences, obscure for the novelist, on the faithful devotion of which some of the most maligned ones were capable, made Mariolle's heart leap, and when she arose to go to Mme. de Frémines, who had obstinately retained the comte de Bernhaus, Lamarthe and Mariolle, captivated by all the feminine artfulness and grace she had displayed, mutually admitted that she was undeniably delightful.

"And now look!" exclaimed the author.

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The great battle was taking place. What were the two women and the Austrian speaking of now? Mme. de Burne had arrived at the very moment when a too lengthy tête-à-tête between two people, however congenial they may be, becomes tiresome. She related with indignation all that Lamarthe had just said. It was easily applicable to Mme. de Frémines, had been uttered by her latest conquest and was repeated before a very clever man who understood any "sous-entendur."

Once more the eternal question was threshed out and the hostess signaled to Mariolle and Lamarthe to join her group. Then, as their voices rose above the hum of general conversation, she called all the guests.

A great discussion followed, brilliant and animated, in which everyone placed a word and in which Mme. de Burne managed to be the most amusing and original of all, for she was really in one of her best moods, prettier, cleverer and more fascinating than ever before.

IV

As soon as André Mariolle took leave of Mme. de Burne, the piquant charm of her personality vanished, and he felt within his flesh and within his soul, in the atmosphere and in the whole world, a sort of vacuum, as if the joy of living he had been feeling for some time had suddenly gone from him.

What had occurred? Nothing, almost nothing. She had been very gracious to him toward the end of the "fête" letting her eyes rest on him as if to say: "No one exists for me, but you." Yet, he felt as if she had revealed a side of her character he would have

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preferred to ignore. That, also, was nothing, almost nothing; and still, he felt stunned, like a man who discovers a questionable act in his father's or his mother's life, to learn that, during the three weeks which he thought had been entirely his, devoted minute by minute to their new and ardent love, she had taken up her old round of pleasure, fought her rivals, hunted admirers, received compliments and used her art of fascination on other men.

Already! She had done all this so soon! Oh! had she done it later, he would not have been surprised. He knew the world, and women, and being clever enough to understand compromises, would never have displayed excessive demands nor absurd jealousy. She was beautiful, and had been created to please, to receive homage, to listen to foolish compliments. She had chosen him among all men and had given herself to him royally, boldly. In spite of everything, he would always have remained her devoted slave and the resigned spectator of her frivolous, fashionable life. But something cried out within him, in that dark chamber of the soul where one's most sacred feelings are hidden.

No doubt he was wrong, and had been wrong, ever since he had known her. He had too much sentiment for this workaday world. The skin of his soul was too tender. That was the cause of the seclusion in which he lived; he feared that his sensitive nature would be bruised. He was wrong, for bruises of that kind are only encountered because a man will not admit that other people possess natures at variance with his own. He knew this to be true, for he had often noted it; and

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still he could not modify the special mold of his character.

He certainly had no reproach to address to Mme. de Burne; if she had kept him away from her, it was only to avoid discovery, and to be able to belong to him more safely in the future. Why had this suffering entered his heart? Ah! Why? Because he had believed her to be entirely wrapped up in him, and that he now saw that he never would be able to possess the entire personality of this woman, a fragment of which belonged to every passer-by. Besides, he knew quite well that life is made up of "half-measures," and, until now, he had been resigned to the fact, concealing his dissatisfaction under voluntary shyness. But this time he had hoped to obtain the "full measure" he had always desired, always looked forward to. But "full-measures," it seems, are not of this world.

He spent a gloomy evening. He tried to banish with arguments the painful impression he had received, but when he went to bed, the impression increased, instead of diminishing, and, as he was in the habit of exploring the most hidden recesses of his soul, he determined to find the causes of the uneasiness which swept over him like a breath of chill air, awakening a feeble, vague suffering, the sure forerunner of excruciating torture.

First, he discovered that he was jealous, not merely like a hopeful lover, but like a man who has tasted of the joys of possession. As long as he had not seen her with other men, he had ignored this sensation, although he had expected something of the sort, but he had fancied that it would be different, vastly different from what he now experienced. In finding his mistress,

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whom he had supposed entirely absorbed, during this first stage of their passion, by ardent thoughts of him, as much, and even more inclined than before, to take up the thread of her old life, to resume her foolish flirtations, he felt jealous, not only in his soul, but in his flesh. It was not a latent feeling, but a very distinct sentiment, for he doubted her.

At first, he doubted through intuition, through a feeling of uneasiness which manifested itself in his flesh more than in his mind, through that almost physical dissatisfaction which comes over a man who is not absolutely sure of his mate. After doubting, he suspected. In what relation did he stand to her? Was he her first, or her tenth, lover? The direct successor of her husband, M. de Burne, or the successor of Lamarthe, or Massival or Georges de Maltry, and perhaps the predecessor of the comte de Bernhaus? What did he know of her? He knew that she was a wonderfully pretty and stylish woman, witty and charming, but he also knew that she was very changeable and easily disgusted, wantonly flirtatious and supremely self-centered. Had she had one or more lovers, before he had entered her life? Had she not had any, would she have yielded to him with such audacity? Where would she have gotten the boldness to enter his room at night, in a wayside inn? Would she have been so ready to go to the little Auteuil house? Before she had consented to see him there, she had only asked a few questions, like an experienced, prudent woman. He had answered in the circumspect way of a man used to such matters and she had at once acceded to his request, fearless and reassured, like a woman hardened by previous adventures,

With what discreet authority she had rapped on the

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little door behind which he, himself, was waiting with a throbbing heart! With what calm assurance she had entered, preoccupied only by the dread that someone in the neighboring houses might recognize her! How quickly she had made herself at home in those questionable rooms which had been installed only to shelter her surrender! A woman, no matter how bold, how much below the accepted standards of morality, could she have preserved such unruffled calm, had she been new to these things?

Mental anxiety, physical hesitation, instinctive fear of feet that do not know where they are treading, would she not have felt all this, were she not experienced in these escapades, and had not the habit of such things brushed off the bloom of her native modesty?

Mariolle tossed restlessly in his bed, unable to evade the torturing thoughts that possessed him like evil spirits. He tried to reason them away, and would find some argument which, for the time being, would appease him, but a germ of fear was within him whose growth he could not stay.

Still, what reproach could he make her? Only the reproach that she was not exactly the same as he, did not look upon life in the same light and did not possess a heart exactly attuned to his.

On awakening the next morning, the desire to see her, to strengthen his confidence in her, became a gnawing hunger and he waited impatiently for the proper time to pay his official call.

When he entered the small salon where she was writing some letters, she rose and held out both hands:

"Ah! bonjour, cher ami," she cried, with an air of

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such joyful and sincere surprise that all his odious thoughts and suspicions vanished at her hearty welcome.

He sat down beside her and began to tell her just how he loved her, for it was not quite the same love it had been. He made her understand that there are, in this world of ours, two kinds of lovers; those who desire with all the strength of their natures and whose love, after possession, weakens and wanes, and those whom possession enslaves, in whom sensual passion, mingling with the inexpressible craving that often fills a man's heart for some woman, creates the overwhelming "grande passion."

Mme. de Burne listened to him with the same rapture she sometimes felt at the play, when an actor entered with exceptional power into his part and awakened within her an echo of her own life. Here too, was an echo; the echo of a sincere passion; but it was not in her that this passion lived and breathed. Still, she was so delighted at being the object of such devotion, so pleased that it should have been awakened in a man so eminently fitted to express it becomingly, in a man whom she really liked, whom she was growing to need more and more, not for her body, for her flesh, but for her mysterious feminine nature which craved affection and homage, that she felt like yielding her lips, her whole self, so that he would continue to worship her forever.

She answered him frankly and without false modesty, with the deep insight that characterizes some women and told him that he, too, had made great headway in her affections.

By a mere chance, no caller appeared that afternoon,

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and they remained alone in the darkening room, speaking of their love with words that had not the same meaning for both of them.

After the lamps had been brought in, Mme. de Bratiane was announced and Mariolle departed. Mme. de Burne accompanied him into the reception room. When he was ready to go he asked:

"When shall I see you again?"

"Shall we say Friday?"

"Yes. What time?"

"The same time. Three o'clock."

"Till Friday, then. I adore you! Good-bye!"

During the two days which preceded that rendezvous, Mariolle experienced a feeling of poignant "ennui" and solitude the like of which he had never before known.

He needed this woman, and nothing in the world existed outside of her. And, as this woman was near, and as it was only conventionality that prevented him from going to her at all times and even living with her, he naturally resented his loneliness, and the absolute impossibility of a thing at once so easy and so natural.

He reached the Auteuil house on Friday three hours before the time set for the rendezvous; but he knew that it would relieve him to wait for her there, after he had so many times waited for her mentally in places where she could not come.

He took up his position behind the door a long while before the three much desired strokes had chimed out, and when he finally heard them, he began to tremble with impatience. The quarter hour was struck by a neighboring clock. He opened the door on a crack,

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peered out and saw that the street was empty. The minutes dragged slowly by. He kept glancing at his watch and when the hand had indicated the half-hour, he felt as if he had been standing behind the door an immeasurably long time. Suddenly he heard a slight noise in the street and three faint raps were sounded on the door. He immediately forgot his anguish in a flood of gratitude.

"Am I very late?" she asked, breathlessly.

"No, not very," he replied.

"Just think of it, I was afraid I would not be able to get here at all. My drawing-room was full of people and I did not know what to do to get them out. Tell me, do you rent this house under your own name?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"So that I could send you a telegram in case something should ever occur to prevent me seeing you."

"I am known as M. Nicolle."

"Very well. I won't forget it. Dieu! How lovely the garden is!"

The florist of the neighborhood, who charged Mariolle a round sum and was paid without a protest, had covered the lawn with five immense flower-beds that filled the air with a delightful fragrance.

Stopping in front of a bench near a heliotrope-bed:

"Let's stay here a little while," she said; "I want to tell you a funny story."

And she related a bit of gossip she had just heard and which filled her with excitement. Mme. Massival, it seemed, the composer's one-time mistress whom he had married, wild with jealousy, had gone to Mme. de Bratiane's house, one evening while an entertainment

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was in progress and while Mme. de Bratiane was singing, accompanied by the composer, had rushed into the room and made a terrible scene; the consequence had been that Mme. de Bratiane was in a white rage and that the guests had an amusing and exciting time.

Massival, crushed with mortification, had tried to drag his wife away; but she slapped his face, pulled his beard and hair, bit him, tore his clothes and refused to move. She fought desperately against Lamarthe and two footmen who, attracted by the uproar, had rushed in and tried to rescue the composer.

After the couple left, calm was with difficulty restored; since the scene Massival had disappeared from his favorite haunts and Lamarthe, who had witnessed the whole proceeding, was going all over town relating it in his own inimitable way.

Mme. de Burne was so much engrossed by the story, that she had no thought for anything else. Mariolle finally was annoyed by her constant reference to Lamarthe and Massival.

"Did you hear it only a little while ago?" he asked.

"Yes, about an hour ago."

"That's why she was late," mused André bitterly.

"Shall we go in?" he inquired.

"Why, yes," she murmured, obedient and absent-minded.

When, an hour later, she left him, for she was in a great hurry, he went into the little house and sat down in a low chair in their room. In his entire body, in his entire soul, was a feeling that he had not possessed her any more than if she had failed to keep the "rendezvous." A gaping, hideous abyss seemed to have opened before him, and he tried to fathom its depths.

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But he could see nothing; he was at loss to understand. She had not escaped from the encircling clasp of his arms, but had, nevertheless, escaped from the embrace of his heart, through a mysterious absence of the desire to be his. She had not refused herself, she had not shunned him, but her heart had been absent; her heart had remained outside; it had not entered with her and was in some other place, lingering over petty matters.

He saw clearly then that he loved her with his flesh as much, if not more, than with his soul. The disappointment produced by her indifference filled him with a frenzied desire to run after her, to bring her back, and to possess her over again. But what was the use, as long as her restless mind was intent on other things? He would have to wait patiently for the days and hours when his capricious mistress would feel the desire to be loving and loved.

He went back to his rooms with a heavy heart and lagging steps, feeling tired of life. And he suddenly remembered that he had omitted to set another date to meet her, at her own house, or elsewhere.

V

UNTIL the beginning of the Winter, she was faithful to their "rendezvous;" faithful, but not prompt.

During the first three months, she was always more or less late, sometimes keeping him waiting one or two hours. As the Autumn rains compelled Mariolle to stand by the door under an umbrella, he had a little shed built where he could protect himself against the

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inclemencies of the weather. The trees were bare. Instead of the roses and all the other plants that had brightened the garden during the Summer, tall white, yellow and purple chrysanthemums filled the beds and gave forth their pungent scent which mingled with the peculiar odor of the rain-soaked earth. In front of the house, the gardener had devised a Maltra Cross of the rarest, most delicately tinted flowers and Mariolle never passed it without thinking that it marked the place of a tomb.

He had now become used to long waits behind the door, in the little shed. The rain fell on the thatched roof and ran down the thin boards; and at each station in this Chapel of Expectation he would go over the same arguments, the same thoughts, the same dreary disappointments with which he had lately been surfeited. It had come to be a battle, a ceaseless, exhausting moral battle with a thing which perhaps had no existence at all; that woman's tenderness. How strange were their "rendezvous."

Sometimes she would be happy and talkative and would sit down without removing her hat or her gloves, without lifting her veil, without even kissing him. She did not remember often, nowadays, to kiss him. She had a thousand different things on her mind of a more alluring nature than the thought of yielding her lips to her lover. He would sit down beside her, his heart and brain filled with burning words that remained unuttered; he would listen, answer, and, while apparently absorbed in what she was saying, would sometimes try to take her hand, which she would lay in his in a perfectly friendly, placid manner.

Sometimes she appeared more affectionate, more

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eager for his kisses; but André, who read her with anxious, keen eyes, the eyes of a lover powerless to win his mistress entirely, divined that she exhibited this relative affection only because her mind, on these rare occasions, was not engrossed by outside things.

Then her constant delays proved conclusively to Mariolle the little eagerness she felt to be with him. One hastens toward something pleasant, something which attracts, but one always arrives soon enough when that something is not enticing; anything, then, serves as a pretext to delay the fateful hour. A strange comparison always rose in his mind. In the Summer, his desire for his daily cold plunge would make him hasten out of bed in the morning, while, in the Winter, he would find so many trifles to attend to before starting, that he would invariably arrive at the bathing establishment an hour late. The "rendezvous" at Auteuil were for her what his Winter baths were for him.

For some time past she had been meeting him less frequently than in the beginning. She thought nothing of postponing a "rendezvous" until the following day, would send a telegram at the eleventh hour, and was always trying to find some plausible excuse which proved very acceptable to her, but which threw her lover into intolerable moral and physical agitation.

Had she shown some coolness, some lassitude toward the love which she knew and felt was ever growing, ever increasing, he would, perhaps, have been irritated, hurt, discouraged and finally cured. But she cared for him, on the contrary, more than ever before. More than ever was she flattered by his passion and desirous

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of retaining it, but without responding to it otherwise than with a friendly devotion that was beginning to make all her other admirers jealous.

At home, she never could see too much of him, and the same telegram that brought him a disappointment for Auteuil, always extended a cordial invitation to dine, or to spend the evening, with her. At first, he thought those invitations were intended to compensate for the postponed "rendezvous," but after a little while he was forced to acknowledge that she liked to see him and preferred his society to that of the other men, that she needed him, needed his presence, his lover-like glance and caressing speech. She needed all these things as an idol, in order to become a god, needs the prayers and faith of its worshipers. In the deserted chapel, it is only a wooden image. But, if only one believer enters its shrine, worships, implores and cries out in religious ecstasy, it becomes the equal of Brahma or Allah, for every beloved creature is a kind of god.

More than any other woman, Mme. de Burne felt fitted for the rôle of an idol, for the mission of being worshiped and pursued, of triumphing over men by her beauty, charm and coquetry.

She filled her part well, the part of a human goddess, delicate, scornful, and proud, when the amorous worship of men deifies and renders overbearingly haughty.

Still, she openly flaunted her affection and preference for Mariolle, without a thought for the world's approval or condemnation, and perhaps with a secret desire to exasperate and dismay the others. Her friends hardly ever called on her without finding Mariolle ensconced in a big armchair, that Lamarthe had named

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"the stall of the officiating priest," and she experienced genuine pleasure talking and listening to him during whole evenings.

She developed a taste for the peaceful life he revealed to her, for contact with a cultivated, enlightened intellect, which was hers as much as the costly ornaments strewn carelessly about the room. Little by little, she yielded much of her own mind, much of her innermost thoughts, in those affectionate confidences that are as agreeable to make as to receive. She felt a greater degree of freedom and familiarity with him than with the others and consequently she liked him better. She also had the impression, dear to women, of giving something, of granting all she could of herself, a thing she had never done before.

For her it was a great deal, but for him it was little. He was always waiting for the great, overwhelming rush of feeling that would throw her, body and soul, into his arms for all time. As for his caresses, she seemed to think them useless, troublesome and rather annoying. She was not entirely indifferent to them, but she was easily satiated; and this satiety no doubt produced "ennui." Even the slightest and most insignificant ones seemed to tire and annoy her. When, in the middle of a conversation, he would take one of her hands and slowly kiss her fingers, one after the other, drawing them in with a little aspiration as if they were candies, she always seemed glad when he released them and he could feel in her whole arm an instinctive effort to escape. When, at the end of her visits, he imprinted a kiss on her neck, between the collar of her gown and the golden hair, a lingering kiss that sought the perfume of her body under the clinging folds of the ma-

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terial, she always had a little backward motion and an imperceptible withdrawing of the skin under the strange lips.

To him, these things were as so many dagger-thrusts and she would leave him with gaping wounds which her indifference had made in his love. Why had she not had that period of surging passion which almost always succeeds, in women, the voluntary and disinterested gift of their bodies? Sometimes it is very short, quickly followed by fatigue and disgust. But how rare when it never exists at all, not a single day, nor a single hour! This mistress had made of him not a lover, but a sort of intelligent partner of her life.

Of what did he complain? The women who yield themselves completely perhaps do not give half as much! He was not complaining, he was only afraid. He was afraid of the other man, the one who might suddenly appear on the scene to-morrow or the day after, an artist, a man about town, an actor or an officer, the one whom Fate had destined to find favor in the eyes of this woman, who would please her and to whom her arms would open wide.

He was already jealous of the Future, as he had, at times, been jealous of her unknown Past; and all the young widow's friends were becoming madly jealous of him. They talked about him behind his back and even went so far as to make very obscure and discreet allusions to Mme. de Burne. In the eyes of some, he was her lover, whereas others, following Lamarthe's ideas, opined that she was amusing herself, as usual, by maddening him in order to distress them, and that there was nothing else in it. Even her father grew anxious and addressed some remarks to her about her conduct

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which she received with great sarcasm. The more talk her attitude created, the more openly she persisted in showing her liking for Mariolle, through a strange sort of perversity that contrasted oddly with her former reserve.

But the rumors that were circulated caused Mariolle some anxiety, and he spoke to her about them.

"What does it matter to me?" she said.

"If only you really loved me!"

"Don't I love you, mon ami?"

"Yes, and no. You love me well in your home and ill outside. I should prefer the contrary to be the case, for myself and even for you."

She laughed and murmured:

"I do what I can."

"If you only knew," he continued, "into what a state of agitation I am thrown by the effort to animate you! Sometimes I feel as if I were trying to clasp thin air to my breast and other times as if I were holding snow which chills me to the marrow and melts away in my arms."

Mme. de Burne made no reply; she did not like the subject and assumed the far-away look she often wore at Auteuil.

He feared to insist and he gazed at her as one gazes upon the rare treasures of a museum which one admires but cannot carry away.

His days and his nights now were nothing but torture, for he lived with the one fixed idea that she was his without truly belonging to him, that she was won, yet heart-free, his own, yet unconquered. He lived in her atmosphere without being able to reach her inner-

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most soul and loved her with all the unsatisfied yearnings of his heart and his body.

He began sending letters as he had done at the commencement of their "liaison." Once he had, with the aid of his pen, broken down her resistance; with his pen, he might again destroy the last barriers which held them apart. He called a little less frequently, and wrote to her almost daily, telling her of the inanity of his efforts to make her as he would have her. Once in a while, when he had been especially eloquent and passionate, she would reply. Her letters, written at one, two or three o'clock in the morning were clear, gracefully expressed, encouraging, devoted, but, nevertheless, horribly disappointing. She reasoned well and wrote wittily, but Mariolle, although her notes were satisfying to his masculine vanity, found that they did not satisfy his yearnings. They did not satisfy him any better than the kisses he received at Auteuil.

He sought to discover the reason for this. And after reading and re-reading the letters till he knew them by heart, he finally discovered what was lacking therein, for it is always through the written word that a person reveals his character. The spoken word is deceiving, because the face lends it charm, because one sees it issue from lips one loves. But words traced on paper reveal the naked soul. A man, through rhetorical subterfuges, professional ability and the habit of using a pen to transact all the business of life, often can completely disguise his personality. But a woman, who scarcely ever writes anything but personal letters, reveals herself in every word. She ignores literary tricks and uncovers her entire soul by the innocence of her ex-

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pressions. He recalled the correspondence and memoirs of famous women he had read. How clearly their individualities stood out! What impressed him the most in Mme. de Burne's letters, was that they never showed the slightest trace of sensibility! That woman could think, but she could not feel! He recalled other letters that he had received, and he had received a large number. A little "bourgeoise" he had once met while traveling and who had loved him a brief space, had written him some charming notes, full of sprightliness and originality. He had even been surprised at the remarkable variety, coloring and subtleness of her expressions. How had she achieved such a gift? She had simply achieved it through acute sensibility. A woman does not polish her expressions and pore over dictionaries, she jots down whatever her emotion dictates. When she feels strongly, she expresses herself aptly, without any trouble and with the utmost sincerity.

It was his mistress' sincerity that Mariolle sought to penetrate through her written words. Her letters were amiable, entertaining, but why, oh! why, didn't she write differently? Why couldn't she find the burning, genuine words of love he found for her? When his man would bring him the morning mail, he would look for her well-known handwriting and when he had discovered it, an uncontrollable emotion would surge through his heart. He would reach for the letter, read the address and tear the envelope. What would it contain? Would the word "love" occur in her letter? Never had she spoken or written that word without adding something that detracted from its significance. "I love you dearly," "I love you a great deal," "Do

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I not love you?" He knew all these formulas by heart, knew that they meant nothing because of the added term. Do any degrees exist, when one is in love? Can one know whether one loves well, or ill? To love very much, how little one must love! One loves, and that should be all sufficient. It is impossible to add anything to that. It is impossible to imagine or to express anything beyond that one little word which means everything. It becomes one's body, one's soul, one's life. One feels it like the warmth of one's blood, one breathes it with the air, one carries it within one's brain as one carries thought, for does it not become the Only Thought? Nothing exists beyond it. It is not a word, but an inexpressible state, represented by four letters. Nothing looks, nothing feels the way it did before one falls in love. Mariolle had become a prey to the little word. And his eyes scanned her letters eagerly to find the expression of a tenderness equal to his own. He found sentences which led him to believe that she liked him very much, but never that she *loved* him! Her letters continued the pretty little romance begun at Mont Saint-Michel. It was literature, not love.

After he had finished reading and re-reading these cherished notes, he would lay them away in a drawer and sit down in his armchair. He had passed many a discouraging hour this way.

After a while she answered less frequently, no doubt tiring of saying the same things over and over. Besides, she was passing through a period of social activity which André had lately foreseen, and which added to his burden the suffering which the smallest disagreeable incidents inflict on troubled hearts.

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It was a Winter of Pleasure. A sort of social fever had taken hold of the city and every night carriage after carriage filled with pretty women in evening gowns rolled through the streets. Society talked of nothing but balls, plays, matinees and receptions. The contagion had spread to all classes, but Mme. de Burne was among the first to experience it.

It began by the success she obtained one night at a ball given at the Austrian Embassy.

Comte de Bernhaus had introduced her to the ambassador's wife, the princesse de Malten, who became quite infatuated with her. In a short time she grew to be the intimate friend of the princess and was able to extend very rapidly, under the latter's guidance, her acquaintance in the diplomatic set and old aristocracy. Her grace, her charm, her elegance, her rare intellect, secured a triumph for her wherever she went and she soon became a favorite. Women of the highest rank asked to be introduced to her.

Every Monday a long line of emblazoned carriages filled the rue du Général-Foy and the attendants, rushing wildly hither and thither, confounded duchesses and baronesses, countesses and marquises.

Mme. de Burne was elated. The compliments and invitations showered on her, the feeling of having become society's pet for the time being, the happiness of being sought out and flattered by the best people in Paris, brought on an acute attack of snobbishness.

Her bohemian set tried to oppose society's invasion and the revolution brought about an alliance between her old friends. Even Fresnel was enrolled and became a power, while Mariolle was put at the head of the opposition, for they were all aware of his influence

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over Mme. de Burne, and of the friendship that existed between them.

But he watched her fly away among her new friends as a child gazes after the balloon which a gust of wind has torn from its grasp.

It seemed to him as if she were fleeing through a gay, dancing throng, far, far away from the secret happiness he had longed for, and he grew insanely jealous of the men and women and things she encountered in her frivolous path. He despised the life she led, the people she met, the fêtes she attended, the balls, concerts, plays that took her away from him by absorbing every minute of the days and nights. The intolerable strain he suffered soon showed in his features, so that one day she inquired:

"Why, what is the matter with you? You have changed and are growing quite thin?"

"I love you too much," he replied.

"One never loves too much, mon ami," she said, casting a grateful look at him.

"Is it for you to say such a thing?" he asked.

"Why, certainly," she murmured.

"And don't you see that loving you in vain is killing me?"

"In the first place, you do not love me in vain. And then it wouldn't kill you. Besides, all my friends are getting jealous of you, which proves that, after all, I do not treat you so badly."

He took her hand in his.

"You do not understand me," he said.

"Yes, I do. I understand you very well."

"Do you know the ceaseless longing that fills my heart?"

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"Yes, I know it."

"Then?" . . .

"Then . . . it hurts me very much, for I like you immensely."

"Then?"

"Then you say to me: 'Be like I am; feel and think as I do.' But I cannot do this, my dear friend. I am what I am. You must take me as the Creator made me, for that is the way I gave myself to you; I do not regret it and have no desire to take my gift back, for you are dearer to me than anyone else."

"You do not love me," persisted Mariolle.

"I love you with all the strength of which I am capable," she replied. "Is it my fault that it is not greater?"

"If I were sure of this, perhaps it might satisfy me."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Mariolle, "that I believe you to be capable of loving differently, but that I do not believe I am able to inspire true love in you."

"No, mon ami, you are mistaken. You are now, and you always will be, at least I sincerely believe so, dearer to me than any other person. With you, I do not have to lie and simulate what you desire, as many other women might do. Be grateful to me for this; do not get excited, and believe in my affection which is wholly and sincerely yours."

Realizing what a distance separated their views on the subject, Mariolle muttered:

"What a strange way to comprehend love! For you, I am only some one you like to have around while for me nothing exists but you."

A kindly smile curved her lips and she replied:

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"Yes, I know it, and I appreciate it. I am delighted and I say to you: Always love me in this way, if you can, because it gives me genuine happiness; but do not compel me to play a comedy. It would only make me unhappy and be unworthy of us both. I knew that this was coming; it is very painful to me, because I am deeply attached to you; yet I cannot transform my nature into one like yours. Take me as I am."

"Did you ever think," he questioned suddenly, "for a day, for an hour, before or afterwards, that you might love me differently?"

She did not reply at once, and seemed somewhat embarrassed.

He waited anxiously and then:

"You see," he cried, "you see, that you, too, dreamed of something different!"

"I may have been deluded about my own nature," she murmured slowly.

"Oh! how much reasoning and psychology!" he cried. "One shouldn't stop to analyze the impulses of one's heart!"

Absorbed by this thought, she remained silent a little while, then added:

"Before loving you as I now do, I did believe for a moment that I would feel more . . . more . . . more passion . . . but then, I would certainly have been less unaffected, less frank later on."

"Why less frank, later on?"

"Because you imprison love in this formula: 'All or nothing,' and to me 'All or nothing' simply means: '*All* at first, and *Nothing* later.' It's when the *Nothing* begins, that a woman starts to lie."

Trembling with excitement, Mariolle answered:

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"Yes, I know it."

"Then?" . . . [illegible] and torture,

"Then . . . it hurts [illegible] ed me differently?

you immensely." [illegible] it will be some other

"Then?" [illegible] like that."

"Then you [illegible] she replied unhesitatingly.

think as I d[illegible] As long as you have felt what

I am wh[illegible] yes, why? [illegible] as long as you have been touched by that tor-

made p[illegible] mingling your life, your soul and your

do n[illegible] with those of another being, as long as you have

fo[illegible] the possibility of this inexpressible emotion, you

will surely experience it some day."

"No," said Mme. de Burne. "My imagination misled me. I give you all I can possibly give. I have thought of it many times since I have been your mistress. You see, I am not afraid of anything, not even words. Really, I am quite convinced that I would never be able to love more, or better, than I love now. Remark that I speak as freely to you as if I were talking to myself. I do so because you are clever and can understand things, and because absolute frankness is the only way to bind us closely to one another for a long time. And that is what I hope to do."

Mariolle drank in her words like a wounded man drinks of the cup held to his lips and suddenly he knelt down and buried his face in the folds of her gown. When he raised his head to look at her, he saw that tears were standing in her eyes. She put her arms around his neck, drew him forward and kissed him gently on the lids.

"Sit down," she pleaded; it isn't very wise to kneel here."

He obeyed and drew up a chair. A slight pause ensued, and then she asked him whether he cared to go

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to see Prédolé's works which had been the talk of Paris ever since they had been exhibited at the galerie Varin. In her boudoir, was a bronze Cupid by Prédolé and she wanted to see the complete collection of his sculptures which were being shown at the well-known gallery.

They set a day and Mariolle rose to take leave.

"Would you like me to come to Auteuil to-morrow?" she whispered.

"Indeed I would!"

And he departed, with the hope that never dies in a lover, singing in his heart.

VI

MME. DE BURNE'S brougham, drawn by two splendid bays, was rolling rapidly through the rue de Grenelle. It was the beginning of April and a slight fall of snow had spread a thin white sheet over the sidewalks. People were hurrying along under their umbrellas with their collars turned up about their ears. After two weeks of beautiful weather, a cold spell had survened, bringing red noses, colds and chilblains in its train.

Her feet resting on a hot-water pan, her body wrapped in a loose fur coat, the comfortable warmth of which penetrated to her skin, the young woman was thinking of the painful necessity that would compel her in less than an hour to take a "fiacre" and drive to Auteuil.

She was haunted by an insistent desire to send Mariolle a telegram saying that it would be impossible for her to see him, but lately she had resolved that she

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would, as much as possible, avoid doing this, because she was trying very hard to love him as he wished to be loved.

She had noticed his sufferings and after the conversation in which she had leaned over and tenderly kissed his eyes, the sincere affection she felt for him at all times, had grown warmer and more expansive.

Surprised at her own coldness, she had often asked herself why she should not be able to love him as so many women love their lovers; she certainly cared for him deeply and he was more to her than all the other men. Only a lazy heart could be the cause of her indifference and this might be overcome like any other form of laziness.

So she tried to overcome it, tried to rouse herself by thinking of him, to experience some sort of emotion the days of their meetings. At times, she actually succeeded, as some people scare themselves at night by thinking of burglars and ghosts.

She even tried to be more caressing and loving. At first she succeeded quite well and rendered him mad with passion. Then it was that she thought she felt some of the fever which she knew consumed him. Her old hope of a real passion, a touch of which she had experienced that night in the garden at Mont Saint-Michel, came to life again, less ideal, less poetical, but more human and precise. She watched herself closely to discover if she felt any of that divine bliss which is born, it is said, when two bodies unite under the impulses of soul affinity. She was disappointed.

However, she obstinately continued to simulate passion. She increased her visits to Auteuil and kept on saying: "I feel I am getting to love you more and

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more." Yet a sensation of fatigue was creeping over her, the inability to feign much longer. She discovered with astonishment that his caresses bored her, although she was not absolutely insensible to them. She discovered this by the vague feeling of lassitude she experienced in her whole body the days she was to meet him. Why, on those days did she not feel the emotion and excitement that other women feel at the approach of the hour when they are to be clasped in their lover's arms? She submitted to his caresses with tender resignation, but never with ardor. Perhaps her flesh, so exceptionally delicate and refined, harbored an unknown modesty, the modesty of a superior and sacred being, which her modern soul had not yet discovered.

Little by little Mariolle began to realize this. He saw her factitious ardor wane, guessed the heroic effort she was making and a deep and mortal sorrow crept into his soul.

She, too, felt that the final test had been made, and that all hope was forever lost. So that to-day, her fur coat wrapped closely around her, her feet on the warm pan, she gazed at the white sidewalks and shivered as she thought how soon she would have to leave her luxurious carriage and take a chilly "fiacre" to go to Mariolle.

Not for a moment did she entertain an idea of breaking with him, of ending their "liaison." She knew that if a woman desires to keep a man from her rivals she must give herself to him and hold him by sensual ties. This was a fatal and logical fact. Besides, it was only fair, she thought, and she wished to be absolutely loyal and fair to him. Well, she would yield again, she would always yield to him. But why so

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often? Would not their meetings have a greater attraction for him if they were not so frequent; if he were forced to consider them as favors not to be granted lightly?

She figured that André's love would be more lasting if she yielded less often, for hunger is increased by fasting, and sensual appetite is very similar to hunger. As soon as she resolved upon this line of conduct, she determined that she would go to Auteuil that very day, but would make him believe that she was ill.

The trip which, a moment ago, had seemed hateful to her, now appeared pleasurable, and suddenly she discovered why she so heartily disliked what, after all, was only normal. A few minutes ago she had been reluctant, while now she was willing! She had been reluctant, because she lived over in advance all the petty annoyances of the meeting! She knew that she was going to prick her fingers on the pins of her gown, that she was going to be unable to find the articles she scattered all over the room in disrobing, because her mind was already absorbed by the odious knowledge that she would have to dress herself without the aid of her maid.

For a moment her thoughts centered on this discovery. Was it not, after all, vulgar and repulsive to make love at set times, to make a "rendezvous" as one sets a day to visit one's physician or lawyer? Nothing more natural than lips meeting and arms clasping, after a long, tender tête-à-tête, in which two hearts and two bodies have felt the mutual attraction of love. How different that must be from the "rendezvous" she knew! It was so true that often, on the days she was not to meet André, she had felt a vague sort of longing to see him, this longing being almost entirely absent

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when she had to go to him with all the precautions of a thief.

Ah! the time for Auteuil! She had calculated it on the various clocks of all her friends, had seen it approach minute by minute when she was calling on Mme. de Frémines, Mme. Bratiane, or the beautiful Mme. Le Prieur. It was her custom to make calls on the days she was to see Mariolle, so as to avoid remaining at home where an unexpected visitor or some unforeseen happening might compel her to give up the "rendezvous."

Suddenly an idea came to her: "To-day I will get there late." Then she proceeded to open a little closet concealed under the black satin lining of the carriage and adjusted a small standing mirror which it contained. Behind the looking glass, could be seen a row of small silver articles: a powder box, a red pencil for the lips, two scent bottles, an ink-well, a pen holder, a pair of scissors, a tiny paper cutter for the latest novel which the fair owner always had on hand. An exquisite little gold clock, the size of a walnut, was attached to the satin doors of the closet; its hands now marked the hour of four.

"I have another hour," thought Mme. de Burne. She touched a spring and the footman on the box took up the speaking tube to receive her orders.

"To the Austrian Embassy," she said.

Then she contemplated herself in the looking-glass with a smile of satisfaction. The face it reflected was dearer to her than anything in the world. After a little while she opened her coat to examine her gown. The high collar was circled by an edge of white feathers that extended lightly over the shoulders and bust, pro-

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ducing the effect of a feathery shield. She wore a toque of feathers, with a tall aigrette of brilliant coloring.

She was still looking at herself when the carriage drove up to the Embassy and rolled through the massive gates. She wrapped her coat around her, closed the doors of the closet and alighted. Turning to the coachman she said:

"You can go back now; I will not need you again."

A footman ran forward to meet her and she queried:

"Is the princess at home?"

"Yes, Madame."

She entered, went upstairs and found Mme. de Malten in a tiny reception room writing letters.

On perceiving her friend, the ambassadress rose with an exclamation of joyful surprise. They kissed each other and then sat down on two low chairs in front of the fire. They were very fond of one another, very congenial in every way and very much alike, for they had been reared in the same atmosphere and traditions, although Mme. de Malten was a Swedish woman who had wedded an Austrian. They exerted a mysterious attraction over each other and were never so happy as when together, gossiping about all the trifles that absorb a fashionable woman's life.

"You see how much I care for you," Mme. de Burne was saying. "You are to dine with me to-night and still I couldn't help dropping in on you this afternoon. It's a passion, my dear."

"A passion that I share," replied the princess smilingly.

The habit of always appearing at their best did not

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The garden wore an air of desolation.

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desert these two women even during their intimate chats, and each one exerted herself to appear fascinating to the other, quite as if a man had been present. Only it was a slightly different feeling of coquetry which prompted them, for men were their natural enemies, while other women were rivals.

During the visit, Mme. de Burne glanced several times at the clock. It was almost five; Mariolle had been waiting an hour. "That's enough," she thought, and rose to go.

"So soon?" inquired the princess.

"Yes," boldly replied Mme. de Burne, "I have an engagement. I would much rather remain with you."

They kissed each other affectionately, and a cab was called for Mme. de Burne.

The horse that drew the rickety conveyance was lame and jogged along slowly and painfully. Mme. de Burne felt like the miserable animal; to her, as to the horse, the trip was long and tedious. The thought of seeing André brought a little balm to her soul; but the thought of what she was about to do worried her.

She found Mariolle almost frozen. A hail storm was whirling through the trees, and the hail-stones struck the umbrella he held above her head, as they hurried toward the house.

The garden wore an air of desolation. The naked trees and wet paths looked forlorn under the heavy, gray sky. And André was pale. He was suffering intensely.

"Dieu! How cold it is," she exclaimed when they entered the house.

A big fire had been built in both rooms, but having

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only been lighted since noon, it had not had time to absorb the dampness of the walls. Mme. de Burne shivered.

"I think I shall keep my coat on a little while," she said.

She threw open the lapels. Her pretty feather trimmed gown made her appear like one of those birds of passage which never dally long in any place.

He seated himself at her side.

"To-night I'm going to give a delightful dinner, and I'm all excitement," she said.

"Whom are you going to have?" inquired André.

"Well — you, for one; then Prédolé, whom I am so anxious to meet."

"Ah! So you're really going to have Prédolé?"

"Yes, Lamarthe is going to bring him."

"But Prédolé isn't a man you'll care for at all! Sculptors in general don't please pretty women and this one would please less than any other, I should say."

"Oh! mon cher, that's impossible. I admire him so."

Since the last two months, after the exhibition of his works at the Varin Gallery, Prédolé had become the rage. Everyone was talking about him, and saying: "He models the loveliest statuettes." And after the artists and connoisseurs who had been called upon to judge the works exhibited in the Gallery had made their verdict known, enthusiasm reached a high pitch.

They discovered that the sculptor possessed a wonderful appreciation of the harmony of lines and that he was gifted with a special talent for bringing out the beauty of the female form. He made a specialty of half-draped figures, the delicate charm of which he

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brought out with rare skill. His dancers, especially, had won much praise through their lightness and grace.

Since a month, Mme. de Burne had been untiring in her efforts to capture the artist. But Prédolé was shy and something of a bear. At last she succeeded through Lamarthe, who had been instrumental in bringing about the sculptor's enormous vogue.

"Who else is coming?" inquired Mariolle.

"The princesse de Malten."

A shade of annoyance passed over André's face, for he disliked the woman.

"And who else?"

"Massival, Bernhaus and Georges de Maltry. That's all; only my 'elite.' You know Prédolé, don't you?"

"Yes, slightly."

"How do you like him?"

"Very well, indeed. He is a man absolutely wrapped up in his Art, the most interesting man to talk to that I've met in a long while."

Mme. de Burne was delighted.

"It will be lovely," she said.

Mariolle had taken her hand in his. He pressed it gently and then kissed it. She suddenly recollected that she had forgotten to say that she was not feeling well, and cast about for some plausible pretext.

"How cold it is here!" she murmured.

"Do you think so?" said Mariolle.

"Yes, I'm chilled to the bone."

He rose and looked at the thermometer, which, in reality, was quite low.

He came back to her and sat down. She had said "How cold it is!" and he thought that he understood

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her meaning. For weeks he had watched her simulated passion grow weaker and weaker, and knew she was tired of feigning. He was so exasperated himself at his own ineffectual attempts to rouse her, and so unnerved by a mad and vain desire of this woman that he would often say desperately: "I prefer to break with her than to continue this life." In order to fathom her thoughts, he remarked tentatively:

"Aren't you going to remove your coat?"

"Oh! no," she said, "I coughed a little this morning. This horrid weather irritates my throat. I'm afraid I'll catch cold."

After a pause she added:

"Had I not wanted to see you so very much, I would not have come out at all."

As Mariolle remained silent, choked by a feeling of rage against himself and against her, she remarked:

"After the beautiful days we've had, this sudden cold spell is very dangerous."

She gazed into the garden where the trees showed green beneath the melted snow.

He gazed at her and thought: "This is the love she has for me!" For the first time in their "liaison" the hatred of the disappointed male rose in him against this woman, against her pretty face, her elusive soul, her absolute indifference.

"She pretends she feels cold," he thought, "but she is only cold because she is here. If it were some entertainment, one of the foolish social affairs that fill up the life of these frivolous creatures, she would brave the cold and risk her life. Doesn't she go out in the bitterest weather, in an open carriage, so as to show her gown? Ah! they are all that way, nowadays. He

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gazed at her again, sitting so calmly at his side. And he knew that under her white forehead, under her little adored forehead was the thought to escape as soon as possible from this disagreeable meeting.

Was it true that once upon a time there existed passionate women and that they still exist? Women whom passion exalts, who suffer, weep, yield with delight, who love with their flesh as with their souls, whose lips murmur endearing words, whose eyes shine with ecstasy, whose hearts throb with joy, whose hands gently caress. Women who brave all sorts of dangers because they love, who steal away by day and by night, eluding watchful guardians, to the one who clasps them, delirious with joy and passion, to his heart.

Oh! to what a horrible love he is chained! To what a joyless, meaningless love, without ecstasy or passion, a love that unnerves him and eats out his very heart! He can only suffer, and weep, and picture the bliss of mutual passion by the impossibility to rouse lips that are as cold and hard as marble.

He continued to gaze at his mistress, a charming vision in her feathered gown. Are not the petty, dainty costumes a woman wears greater obstacles to overcome than the woman herself? Was not the gown she wore to-day a jealous guardian, who defended her against his passion?

"Your costume is charming," he remarked, for he did not wish to speak of the subject uppermost in his mind.

"Wait till you see the one I am going to wear to-night," she answered with a smile. She coughed several times. Then she spoke:

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"I am really catching cold. Let me go home, mon ami. The sun will come back soon, and so will I."

He did not insist, for he felt that it would be useless and that the last hope of hearing passionate words gush from her lips, of seeing a gleam of love in her calm eyes, had vanished forever. And suddenly he felt the stern resolve to escape from her torturing domination, form within his brain. She had nailed him to a cross, where his life's blood was slowly ebbing from him, while she looked on unmoved, uncomprehending, even delighted with what she had accomplished. But he would tear himself from the cross even were he to leave pieces of flesh and his mangled heart behind. He would flee like a wild beast which a party of hunters have almost killed and he would hide in some wilderness where his wounds would heal and where he would only feel the dull ache of his scars.

"Well then, goodby," he murmured.

She was startled by the sadness of his tone.

"Until this evening, mon ami," she said.

"Until this evening," he repeated mechanically. "Goodby."

He accompanied her to the little door in the garden and then walked slowly back to the house, and sat down in front of the fire, alone.

Alone! How cold it really was! And how sad he felt! This was the end! What a horrible thought! An end to hope, an end to waiting for her, dreaming of her with that ardor which, at times, makes us poor mortals glow on this sad little planet of ours, like those bonfires built on dark hights. Goodby to the solitary nights spent in thinking of her, goodby to the mornings

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on which he would exclaim: "I am to see her to-day in our little nest!"

How he loved her! how he loved her! how hard it would be to cure himself! She had left him because it was cold! He could see her now, with her bewitching eyes and smile, leading him on so as to more surely break his heart. Ah! she had broken it at last, by a final effort. He could feel the wound; it was an old wound she had made and healed once before, and which now she had re-opened by thrusting into it the keen edge of her indifference. He even felt that from his wounded heart something overflowed that rose up in his throat and choked him. He put his hands before his eyes so as to hide his own weakness and tears slowly trickled down his cheeks.

She had left him because it was cold! While he would have walked barefooted through snow and ice to the end of the world, to join her. He would have plunged headlong from a cliff only to fall at her feet. He remembered an old story he had heard long ago; the story of the "Hill of the Two Lovers" (La Côte des deux Amants) which is on the road to Rouen. A young girl, to obey the cruel mandate of a stern father who had forbidden her to wed her sweetheart unless she carried him to the top of a steep mountain, dragged her lover up the rocky paths on her hands and knees, and died when she reached the summit. But love has become nothing more than a legend, to be sung in verse or narrated in false fiction.

Had not his mistress, in the beginning of their "liaison" uttered a phrase he had never forgotten?: "The men of to-day never love women sufficiently to

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be hurt by it. Believe me, for I know them." She had been mistaken in his case, however, but not in her own, for had she not added: "In any case, I warn you that I am incapable of becoming infatuated with anyone . . ."

With anyone? Was that true? Not with him, of course; he was positive now that she could never care for him, but would she not care for someone else?

The sensation of having spoiled his life, a feeling which he had often experienced, now rushed over him with renewed intensity. He had not succeeded in anything; he had failed in all his attempts and had accomplished nothing. The arts had attracted him, but he had not had the courage nor the perseverance to attain eminence in any one of them. He had rejoiced at no success, no devotion to a worthy cause had ennobled and elevated him. His one energetic effort to win a woman's heart had miserably miscarried, like all his other endeavors. He was nothing but a failure.

The tears still trickled slowly through his fingers on to his lips and their salty taste increased his feeling of despondency.

When he raised his head at last, he noticed that it had grown dark. He had just sufficient time to reach his rooms and dress for the dinner she was giving that night.

VII

ANDRE MARIOLLE was the first guest to arrive at Mme. de Burne's. He sat down in the drawing-room and let his eyes wander over all the familiar things he had known and cherished for

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months; it was here that he had first met her, that he had learned to love her, that he had discovered the great passion which had changed the whole course of his life. How he loved all these things, what a delightful background they formed for this exquisite creature! How well he knew the simple, aristocratic perfume, orris-root, that emanated from the draperies! It was here that he had experienced every emotion, from the hopeful ecstasy of the beginning, to the mournful despair that now encompassed him. He pressed the arms of the deep chair in which he was seated as if they belonged to a friend. He wished that she would remain away, that nobody would come in to disturb him. He wanted to sit there all night, to dream of his dead love as one might watch over a corpse. Then, in the morning, he would go away, far away, never to return.

The door leading into the bedroom suddenly opened and Mme. de Burne came in. He controlled himself and greeted her calmly. To-night she was not a woman but a living nosegay. A garland of carnations encircled her waist and skirt. Another one of forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley edged the "décolletage," while three magnificent orchids rested against her pale bosom. Her blonde hair was strewn with violets whose hearts were tiny brilliants. Other brilliants, trembling on long gold stems, glistened like dew drops among the flowers at her breast.

"I will surely have a headache," she remarked, "but I don't care, these things are so becoming."

A woodland fragrance emanated from her; she was fresher than the flowers she wore. André, completely dazed, could not remove his eyes from her. He thought that, to take her in his arms, would be as bar-

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barous as to stamp on a fresh flower-bed. The bodies of these women were no longer made for love; they were only dummies on which to hang expensive gowns. They looked like flowers, they looked like birds, they looked like a thousand different things excepting women. The women of past generations employed artifices to enhance their beauty; that was a known fact; but their prime object was to please through the direct fascination of their bodies, through the natural witchery of their sex, through the irresistible attraction that the female form exerts over men. To-day, coquetry had become the sole aim and artifices were the means to another end, for women used them more to irritate their rivals than to win admirers for themselves.

What was the object in view when Mme. de Burne had designed this costume? Was it to please her lover, or to mortify Mme. de Malten?

Just then the door was thrown open, and the Austrian ambassadress was announced.

Mme. de Burne ran to meet her and kissed her lightly on both cheeks, careful not to disarrange the orchids at her breast. It was a pretty kiss, given and returned with undisguised pleasure.

Mariolle thrilled with anguish. Not once had she kissed him that way during all the time of their "liaison" and by an abrupt change of mind, he muttered furiously: "These women are no longer created for us!"

Presently Massival entered the drawing-room, closely followed by M. de Pradon, the Comte de Bernhaus, and Georges de Maltry, resplendent in English evening clothes.

Lamarthe and Prédolé were the only guests who had

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not arrived. The conversation turned on the sculptor and everybody proceeded at once to laud him to the skies.

"He had brought to life again the traditions and grace of the Renaissance period, and had added a touch of modern realism;" according to Georges de Maltry, he was "the discoverer of human suppleness." These various sentences had been repeated from mouth to mouth ever since the exhibition in the rue Varin.

At last Prédolé arrived. His appearance caused some astonishment. He was a large man of indeterminate age, with the shoulders of a son of the soil. His big head was covered with bushy gray hair and his features were heavy and coarse. He carried his arms awkwardly and appeared extremely ill at ease, letting his enormous hands dangle helplessly at his sides. They were broad and thick with hairy, muscular fingers; they were the hands of a Hercules or of a butcher and seemed greatly to inconvenience their owner, who would gladly have concealed them, had it been possible.

His face, however, was lighted by a pair of gray eyes which darted keen glances and gave animation to the stolid features. One felt instinctively that, behind these eyes, was a powerful and masterly intellect.

Mme. de Burne, a little disappointed in her expectations, politely indicated a chair into which the sculptor sank with visible embarrassment.

Lamarthe, being a skilled introducer, went up to his friend in an effort to break the ice.

"Mon cher," said he, "let me show you where you are. You have already seen our divine hostess; now glance at the treasures which surround her."

He made a sweeping gesture and indicated an au-

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thentic bust by Houdon, on the mantel-shelf, and a Boule writing-desk, where dancing women by Clodion formed a charming group. Then he showed Prédolé four statuettes of Tanagra of the most perfect type. The sculptor's countenance shone with as much delight as if he had found his children in a desert. He rose from the deep chair in which he was ensconced and started toward the Tanagra statuettes; he grasped two in each hand and, for a moment, Mme. de Burne trembled for her property. But as soon as he touched them his massive fingers seemed to grow nimble and caressing. He manipulated them with surprising ease, turning them round and round in his thick hands and fondling them with rapture. To watch him gaze at the little figures, was to divine that this coarse-featured man felt an ideal and unique tenderness for everything that was dainty and beautiful.

"Aren't they delightful?" said Lamarthe.

The sculptor praised them highly and mentioned the most remarkable ones he knew. He used few words, but his expressions denoted a clear comprehension of their value.

Then, under Lamarthe's guidance, he examined the various antiquities that Mme. de Burne had collected with the help of her friends. He was appreciative and enraptured and handled everything his eye admired, as if to bring himself in closer contact with its beauty. A very heavy bronze statuette was hidden in a corner; he seized it with one hand, carried it to the light, turned it in every direction, and finally put it back in its place, without the least effort.

"Here's the fellow cut out to battle with stone and marble," cried Lamarthe.

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Everyone stared at Prédolé with approval.

A footman announced:

"Madame is served."

The hostess took the sculptor's arm and led the way to the dining-room. After everyone was seated, she turned to him graciously, and remarked:

"Your art has also, I believe, the advantage of being the oldest of all arts?"

"Mon Dieu!" he replied, "the shepherds in the Old Testament played the flute; so harmony, it seems, would be older than sculpture, although our idea of music does not date very far back. But real sculpture is very ancient."

"Do you like music?" she asked.

"I love all arts," he answered gravely.

Then she asked:

"Is the inventor of sculpture known?"

Prédolé did not answer at once; he reflected a few minutes, and then, in a soft voice, related the following legend:

"The Greeks attributed its discovery to Dædalus, But the prettiest legend is the one which attributes it to a potter named Dibutades. His daughter, Kora, having traced with charcoal the profile of her betrothed, her father filled it in with clay and modeled it. My art was born at that moment."

Lamarthe murmured: "Charming." Then, after a little while, he said:

"Ah! if you only wanted to, Prédolé!"

Then he turned to Mme. de Burne:

"You cannot imagine, madame, how interesting this man can be when he is speaking of his art, how well he

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can express his meaning and make other people enter into his feelings."

But the artist did not seem inclined to air his views. He had fastened one end of his napkin to his collar, and was eating his consommé with slow enjoyment, with that kind of respect that a peasant shows for soup.

Then he drank a glass of wine and straightened up, feeling more at ease.

From time to time he would try to turn around to catch a glimpse of a modern group placed on the mantel-shelf behind him and with which he was not familiar.

Finally, unable to restrain himself any longer, he leaned over to his hostess and inquired:

"It is by Falguières, isn't it?"

Mme. de Burne laughed.

"Yes, it's by Falguières. How did you know?"

Prédolé smiled.

"Oh! I can recognize at a glance the sculpture of people who paint and the pictures of people who do not confine themselves exclusively to painting. It isn't at all like the work of a man who practices only one art."

Lamarthe, prompted by a desire to show his friend off, asked for explanations and Prédolé acceded to his wish. He defined and characterized the paintings of sculptors and the sculpture of painters in a manner so precise and original, that all eyes were watching him and all ears were strained to catch his words. Making his demonstration go back to the beginnings of art and choosing illustrations as he went along, he mentioned the first Italian masters, who were both painters and sculptors, Nicolo and Giovanni da Pisa, Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti. He quoted the interesting opinions

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of Diderot on the subject and, in conclusion, cited the doors of the Baptistry of Saint John, in Florence, by Ghiberti, which are so dramatic and life-like that they look more like paintings than bas-reliefs.

With his thick hands gesticulating rapidly to illustrate his meaning, he spoke so brilliantly on the subject, that everyone was spell-bound.

Then, as some dishes he relished were being passed around he stopped short in his dissertation and applied himself assiduously to his plate.

He did not have much to say after that, and listened abstractedly to the general conversation, which touched upon a political rumor, theatrical and society news, an article published in the "Revue des Deux-Mondes" and the recent opening of the horse show. He ate and drank copiously, but his brain remained clear, and unclouded despite his frequent libations.

After the guests had re-assembled in the drawing-room, Lamarthe, who was disappointed in his "protégé," drew him aside to show him a rare piece of art, a silver inkstand carved by Benvenuto Cellini, and which was celebrated among art connoisseurs.

A sort of delirium took hold of the sculptor at the sight of the masterpiece; he gazed at it as others gaze upon the face of a beloved mistress. Seized with emotion, he lauded the work of the great Italian master in a few well-chosen words, and seeing that he had made an impression on his audience, he sank into a deep armchair, still holding the inkstand in one massive hand, and launched forth on a dissertation on the numerous artistic marvels he had seen. He rendered comprehensible to his listeners, the strange emotion that graceful forms produced in his soul. For years he had

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traveled the earth to view marble, stone, wood and bronze wrought into statues by hands of genius, or gold, silver, copper and ivory, transformed into masterpieces by the eerie fingers of divine artists.

The men stood around his chair and listened with rapt attention, while the two women, a little bored, sat by the fire and talked in low tones. To them it was marvelous that men could take such a vivid interest in mere inanimate forms.

When Prédolé stopped, Lamarthe, carried away with enthusiasm, wrung his hand and exclaimed:

"Really, I feel like hugging you. You are the only real artist and great man of to-day, the only one who truly loves his art. You find genuine contentment in its practice and never tire or grow disgusted. You handle the highest, purest and most inaccessible form of Everlasting Art. You give birth to Beauty through a mere line, and care not a fig for anything else. I drink a glass of brandy to your health."

After that, the conversation again became general, but it lacked its former animation as if the ideas which had been emitted still lingered in the atmosphere to smother any attempt at frivolity.

Prédolé left early, giving as reason for his departure, that he was hard at work every morning at sunrise.

After he had gone, Lamarthe turned enthusiastically to Mme. de Burne.

"Well! How do you like him?" he asked.

Mme. de Burne hesitated, then, with a disappointed look, remarked:

"Oh! I think he is rather interesting, but a little tiresome."

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The author smiled. "Of course. He didn't admire your gown and you were the only one of the ornaments that he hardly noticed," he thought. Then, after a few courteous remarks, he went and sat down by the princess de Malten. The comte de Bernhaus approached his hostess, took a foot-stool and sat at her feet. Mariolle, M. de Pradon, Massival and Maltry formed a little group to discuss the sculptor who had made a great impression on their minds. M. de Maltry, comparing him to the old masters whose lives were illumined and glorified by their pursuit of Beauty, emitted his complicated opinions in subtle and tiresome phrases.

Massival, tired of taking part in the discussion of an art which was not his own, joined Mme. de Malten and sat down by Lamarthe. The latter soon rose and went over to the group of men.

"Are you ready to go home?" he asked of Mariolle.

"Yes, indeed," replied the latter.

The author was fond of seeing his friends home, so that he could launch into nocturnal discussions while on the way. His clear, sharp voice rang through the quiet streets. He always felt especially eloquent and happy in his expressions during these tête-à-têtes, and would discourse upon his favorite topics, without caring whether or not replies were forthcoming to the theories he propounded. He could look forward to a sound sleep after he had thus tired his limbs and his lungs.

But Mariolle was exhausted. His disappointments, his sorrows, his misfortunes all rose before his mind as soon as Mme. de Burne's door had closed behind them. He could not stand it any longer, and he would not. He would go away, never to return.

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When he had bade Mme. de Burne good-night, she had answered very abstractedly.

The two men walked slowly homeward. The wind having changed, the air was soft and mild; the sky, strewn with stars, vibrated as if a premature breath of summer lent added brilliancy to the myriad specks of light.

The sidewalks had dried, although large puddles of water still shone on the asphalt in the middle of the streets.

"What a happy man Prédolé is!" . . . began Lamarthe. "He loves only one thing on earth, his Art! He is really an artist of olden times. Ah! there's a man who hasn't much use for women, for the kind of women we know, who array themselves in grotesque fashions. Did you notice how little attention he paid to the two beauties to-night? What he wants is real, not artificial, plastic. It is true that our divine hostess thought him a fool and a bore. For her, a bust by Houdon, Tanagra statuettes, on an inkwell by Cellini are only the little details necessary for the proper background of the real *masterpiece*, which is *Herself; Herself* and her *gown*, for her gown is a part of *Herself;* it is the new note she adds every day to her beauty. How personal and frivolous women are, after all!"

He stopped and pounded the sidewalk with his cane. Then he continued:

"They know and appreciate whatever sets them off; costumes and jewelry, the style of which changes about every ten years; but whatever requires deep and delicate artistic perception, the exercise of purely esthetical comprehension, is ignored. Then, they only have very

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rudimentary senses, the senses of female animals, difficult to perfect, inaccessible to whatever does not directly touch the feminine egotism which absorbs their entities. Their tactics are those of savages. They are almost incapable of tasting the joys of an inferior order, which requires the special education and attention of some one organ, like good-living, for instance. When, once in a while, they actually do relish good cooking, they always remain incapable of appreciating good wines, which speak only to masculine palates, for wines do speak."

He pounded the sidewalk again, as if to emphasize his last remark.

"But one must not ask so much of them," he continued. "This lack of comprehension and perception which mars their intellectual insight concerning the higher things of life, also blinds them concerning us. In order to win them, one does not require a heart, an intellect, a soul, and exceptional qualities, such as were demanded in olden times, when a woman fell in love with a man because of his worth and his courage. The women of to-day are actresses who repeat a part they no longer believe in, through tradition. They require actors to play opposite them and to act the same lies that they act. I mean by the word 'actors' all society and other clowns."

They walked along in silence for a little while, arm touching arm. Mariolle, who had listened attentively, was mentally repeating the author's opinions and approving them. Besides, he had heard that an Italian adventurer, prince Epilati, who was giving fencing lessons in Paris, and whose fine figure, exhibited in black silk tights, had set society women and "demi-mon-

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daines" by the ears, was, at the present time, engrossing the attention of the little baronne de Frémines.

As Lamarthe seemed to have exhausted his ideas, Mariolle remarked:

"It's our own fault; we choose badly; there are other women besides these!"

To this the author replied:

"The only ones still capable of love are shop-girls or little, mismated 'bourgeoises.' I have sometimes brought aid to these souls in distress. They are overflowing with sentiment, but 'tis such vulgar sentiment that, to exchange it for ours, is like giving alms. So I maintain, that in our present wealthy society, where the women have nothing to do and nothing to wish for, where the men have regulated pleasure as well as business, the old, powerful, natural sex attraction, no longer exists."

"It's quite true," murmured Mariolle.

His desire to go away, to escape from these people, these puppets who, for the sake of a pastime mimicked the true, beautiful passion of love without experiencing its joys and pangs, grew stronger every minute.

"Good night, I'm going to bed," he said to Lamarthe.

He went to his rooms, sat down at his desk and wrote:

"Goodby, madame. Do you remember the first letter I wrote you? I said goodby to you then, but I did not go away. How wrong of me! When you receive this note, Paris will lie far behind me. Need I tell you why I am going away? Men like myself should never meet women like you. Were I an artist, and could I express my feelings in a way that might re-

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lieve me, you might have given me talent. But I am nothing but an ordinary man, and my love for you has crushed my heart. When I met you, I would not have thought it possible to suffer this way. Another woman might have filled my soul with gladness; but you filled it only with torment. It is not your fault, I know; I do not reproach you and feel no bitterness in my heart. I haven't even the right to send you these lines. Forgive me. You are so constituted that you cannot feel what I feel, that you cannot even guess what is in me when I am with you, when I look into your eyes and hear your voice. Yes, you yield to me, you accept me, you offer me a reasonable and peaceful happiness, for which I should thank you on my knees. But I spurn it. Oh! what a horrible love is the one that has to beg for a passionate word, for a sincere caress, and that never receives what it yearns for! My heart is as empty as the stomach of a beggar would be, who had followed you and implored charity. You threw it valuable things, but you did not give it bread.

"It was bread, it was *love,* that I wanted. I am going away, miserable and poverty-stricken like the beggar, because you refuse me your heart which would have saved me. I have nothing on earth but a cruel wound which throbs in my soul and which must be healed. I am going to try to do it.

"Goodby. Forgive me. Even to-night I love you with my whole soul. Goodby, madame.

"ANDRE MARIOLLE."

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PART THIRD

I

IT was a radiant morning. Mariolle stepped into the cab that was waiting at the door, and two trunks and a valise were hoisted on top by the driver. He had ordered his man, the previous night, to pack enough clothes for an extended absence. He was going away alone; he did not want to see one familiar face that would remind him of Paris, nor hear one familiar voice, while he was thinking of certain matters. He left a temporary address with his man "Fontainebleau, poste restante."

"To the gare de Lyon!" he shouted to the driver, and the cab rumbled off. His thoughts turned to his departure for Mont Saint-Michel, the foregoing spring. It would soon be a year that he had taken that trip. To distract his mind, he gazed out of the window.

The cab turned into the Champs-Elysées, which were bathed in a flood of spring sunshine. The little green leaves, whose growth had not been arrested by the two days of chilly weather, and which were unfolding more and more, under the invigorating sun, gave forth a pungent odor of fresh verdure. It was one of those mornings when one knows that, throughout Paris, in the public gardens and along the avenues, the round chestnut-trees will blossom forth in a day, like huge, blazing chandeliers. The whole earth seemed to expand and send forth strong currents of vigorous life.

Mariolle was thinking: "At last I will be able to get peace. I will watch the spring blossom forth in the still, deserted woods." The trip seemed endless.

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He was as much exhausted by the one sleepless night he had spent in bemoaning his fate, as if he had remained for days by the bedside of a dying friend.

When he reached Fontainebleau, he hastened to a notary to find out whether he could rent a furnished cottage in the neighborhood of the forest. Several desirable houses were submitted to him, but the one that pleased him most had just been vacated by a young couple who had spent almost the whole winter in the village of Montigny-sur-Loing. The notary, although a grave, dignified man, smiled; he imagined that he had chanced upon some love affair.

"Are you alone, monsieur?" he inquired.

"Yes, quite alone."

"Without servants?"

"Yes, without servants. I left mine in Paris. I will get some of the natives to wait on me. I came here to work in absolute retirement."

"Oh! At this time of the year, you will not be bothered!"

A few minutes later, an open Victoria was carrying Mariolle and his trunks toward Montigny.

The forest was just awakening. At the foot of the great trees, the tops of which were beginning to assume the pale green tint of budding foliage, the bushes already wore a deeper hue. The early birch-trees, with their silver boughs, seemed already clad in summer's garb, although the enormous oaks showed only small patches of delicate green on the end of their branches. The beech-trees were opening their buds and shedding the last leaves of the previous autumn.

Along the road, the grass grew thick and opulent, filled with the strong fresh sap of spring, and the odor

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that Mariolle had noticed in the Champs-Elysées enveloped him like a great bath poured from all the green things beneath his feet and above his head. He drew deep breaths, inhaling the invigorating atmosphere like a prisoner who has for years been denied a glimpse of nature. Like a man who has cast aside his fetters, he stretched his arms along the back of the carriage and let his hands dangle loosely over the wheels.

How good it was to breathe this pure, fresh air! But how much of it he would have to inhale before his suffering would decrease, before he would feel it penetrate through his lungs to his heart, and refresh the deep wounds there with its cool caress!

He passed through Marlotte, where the driver showed him the "Hôtel Corot" which had just been opened, and which, he said was very original. Then they turned into another road which wended its way between the forest, on the left, and a big plain with trees and hills on the right. At last appeared a village street, a long white street, bordered on each side with tiny slate-covered houses. Here and there the pale green foliage of a lilac-bush nodded above a garden-wall.

This street ran parallel with a narrow valley that descended to the little stream. When Mariolle glimpsed the latter, he thrilled with delight. It was a small, rapidly whirling stream which, on one side, bathed the foot of houses and gardens, and on the other laved green meadows where a few graceful trees were showing their first leaves.

Mariolle found the place without trouble and was delighted with it. It was an old house that had been

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restored by an artist, who had lived in it five years and had afterwards rented it. It was built right on the water, and had a pretty garden that ended in a terrace bordered with lime-trees. The Loing, which at that point, formed a little cataract, flowed turbulently past the foot of this terrace, and from the front windows one could look out upon the meadows.

"I will get well here," thought Mariolle.

Everything had been arranged with the notary in case the house was found suitable. The driver took back the answer. Mariolle proceeded at once to install his household; it was an easy task for the Mayor's secretary provided two elderly women, one to act in the capacity of cook and the other as housemaid.

On the ground floor were a parlor, a dining-room, the kitchen and two smaller rooms; on the first floor, a fine bedroom and a living-room, which the owner had fixed up as a studio. Everything was well planned and attractive, although the place bore the air of untidiness and neglect which characterizes houses that are generally unoccupied. Still, there were traces of recent tenants. A pleasant smell of verbena lingered in the air. "Tiens! thought Mariolle, verbena, a simple perfume! The woman who lived here before I came could not have been complex . . . happy man!"

Night soon arrived, for all these different matters had made the day pass quickly. Mariolle sat down by an open window to drink in the moisture that rose from the dew-soaked pastures and to watch the setting sun cast deep shadows over the meadows beyond the stream. The two elderly servants were preparing dinner and their rough peasant voices rose in the stillness

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of the peaceful evening, while from outdoors came the barks of a shepherd dog driving a herd of cows home from the pastures.

All was calm and peaceful. For the hundredth time that day, Mariolle asked himself these questions: "What did she think when she received my letter? . . . What will she do? . . . . ".

Then he thought: "What is she doing now?" He glanced at his watch — half after six.—"She is home, and is receiving callers."

In his mind's eye he beheld the drawing-room, and the young woman conversing with the princesse de Malten, Mme. de Frémines, Massival and the comte de Bernhaus.

His soul thrilled with anger. He wished he could be there, too. It was his time for calling on her. And he felt a strange uneasiness within him, not a regret, for his mind was firmly made up, but a sort of physical suffering similar to that of a sick man to whom the accustomed solace of morphine has been refused.

The meadows, the sun, fast disappearing behind the hills, had vanished for Mariolle. He saw only this *Woman*, surrounded by her friends, absorbed by the worldly triumphs that had stolen her from him: "I must not think of it," he said.

He rose, went down into the garden and walked to the terrace. The stream at the dam sent sprays of water into the air and the coldness of the atmosphere chilled his already heavy heart and determined him to go back to the house. His place was set in the dining-room. He dined rapidly and, as he had nothing to do, and as the uneasiness of body and soul which had beset him in the early part of the evening, was returning

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with renewed intensity, he retired to his room and went to bed. He closed his eyes in an effort to woo forgetfulness; but it was in vain. His thoughts were too active and would not leave that woman. Whose mistress would she now be? No doubt she would choose the comte de Bernhaus. He was the right man for such a woman, a man before the public, distinguished, popular and refined. She liked him, for she had used all her wiles to capture him, although, at the time, she was the mistress of another man.

Little by little consciousness left him, to wander in the by-paths of sleep, but always this *woman* and this *man* appeared before him, to disturb the restful slumber he sought. All night long the two phantoms hovered around his couch, irritating him, braving him, vanishing for a time, only to reappear with greater distinctness.

He arose at dawn, dressed and started on a long tramp through the forest.

The early sun shone through the denuded limbs of the oaks and fell on patches of emerald grass, dead leaves and russet bushes; yellow butterflies drowsed along the road like little, dancing flames.

A hillock, almost a small mountain, appeared on the right side of the road, covered with pines and purplish boulders. Mariolle climbed it and when he had reached the top, sat down on a huge rock, struggling for breath. His legs were trembling, his heart beating fast; his whole body seemed exhausted by a strange sense of fatigue.

This feeling of exhaustion was not superinduced by lassitude; it came from *Her*, from that burdensome love that weighed him down. "What misery!" he mut-

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tered. "Why does she hold me that way, I who have never exacted from life more than reasonable enjoyment and freedom from pain?"

His attention, sharpened by the dread of the suffering which he knew would be so difficult to eradicate, centered upon himself and descended into the hidden depths of his soul to expose the secret of this bewildering state of mind.

"I never was infatuated," he reasoned; "I am not an enthusiast, I am not what is called a passionate man; I have greater judgment than instinct, greater curiosities than appetites, greater changeability than perseverance. I am really only an intelligent, fastidious pleasure-seeker. I have enjoyed the good things of life, without attaching myself deeply to them, with the senses of an expert who relishes them but does not get intoxicated, being far too wise to lose his head. I reason out everything and generally analyze my inclinations too well to be led astray by them. In fact, that is my one great mistake, my sole weakness. And, in spite of all, in spite of my knowledge of, and distrust for her, that Woman entered my life; she owns me as if she had plucked one by one all other aspirations from my mind. Perhaps it is that. I scattered them broadcast on inanimate things, on Nature, which I love, on music, which is a sort of ideal enjoyment, on thought, which is the supreme delight of Mind and on all that is agreeable and beautiful in the world. And then I met a being who gathered in all these floating aspirations, and, directing them toward herself, converted them into Love. Dainty and beautiful, she appealed to my eyes; witty, intelligent and crafty, she appealed to my soul; and she appealed to my heart

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through a mysterious fascination emanating from her personality and presence, that conquered me like the perfume of certain flowers gains mastery over one's senses.

"She embodied everything for me, for I aspire toward nothing, I have no desire, no need, no thought for anything else.

"Any other time, how I would have thrilled with rapture in this wonderful forest! To-day, I barely notice it, do not feel it, am away in thought, although present in body; I am with that *Woman* whose image I want to destroy in my heart.

"Well! I'll have to dull my brain with exercise; otherwise, I will never be cured."

He rose, climbed down the hill, and started off at a great pace. But the obsession bowed him down like a pack on his shoulder.

He walked on and on, as rapidly as possible. Here and there, at the sight of the sun gleaming through the delicate foliage, at the passing of an invigorating pine breeze, a brief sensation of relief would come over him, like a presentiment of the still far off time when he would at last be consoled.

Suddenly he stopped: "I am not walking," he said to himself, "I am fleeing." Yes, he was fleeing from the torment of his shattered love.

Presently he started off again at a more reasonable pace. The forest was changing; it was growing denser and greener, for he was fast approaching its warmest part, the beautiful region of birch-trees. No reminder of Winter now. Tender Spring seemed to have blossomed forth overnight, so fresh and delicate was Nature's new garb.

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Mariolle plunged into the thicket under the gigantic trees that grew taller and taller as he proceeded and walked straight ahead for a long time, crushing tender grass underfoot, and brushing against the shiny new leaves of the bushes. The immense dome formed by the treetops concealed the sky and was supported by long, straight or inclined trunks, sometimes whitish, sometimes darkened by black moss clinging to the barks. They succeeded one another indefinitely, rising high above the bushes at their feet and covering them with a thick cloud of foliage through which pierced shafts of brilliant sunshine. The whole forest seemed steeped in a glorious greenish vapor, with here and there rays of golden light.

Mariolle stopped, thrilled with inexpressible astonishment. Where was he? Was he in a forest, or at the bottom of a sea all of light and leaves?

He felt better, calmer, less haunted, and he stretched himself luxuriously on the carpet of russet leaves which the trees only shed when they take on their Summer vesture.

The coolness of the ground and the mild, balmy air, quieted his distraught nerves. After a little while, a desire, vague at first, but which grew more and more precise, crept into his heart. The spot was too charming to be enjoyed alone, and he thought: "Oh! if she were only with me now!" He suddenly remembered Mont Saint-Michel, and how different she was there, from what she was in Paris. Before the marvels of nature, her heart had expanded and, for a few brief hours, she had loved him a little. On the road, wet with the receding tide, in the cloister, where she had murmured "André" and seemed to say "I am yours,"

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on the narrow ledge circling the Abbey tower, where he had held her for a brief moment in his arms, she had experienced a sort of attraction which had never returned after her little feet had trod the sidewalks of Paris.

But here, in this magnificent, sunlit forest, alone with him, would not that sweet and elusive emotion experienced on the Norman coast, come back to her? Little by little, his eyes grew tired of the trees and the sunlit leaves, and his lids drooped lower and lower, until they closed entirely. He fell asleep, and when he awoke, found that the afternoon was quite advanced.

He arose, feeling less depressed and started homeward. He finally emerged from the forest and found himself at a spot from which radiated six long roads. A post bore a sign on which was painted: "Le Bouquet du Roi" (The King's Bouquet). It was really the capital of that royal region of Birch-trees.

An empty carriage drove past; Mariolle hailed it and told the driver to take him to Marlotte, from whence he would proceed on foot to Montigny, after stopping at an inn for dinner.

He remembered having seen a restaurant that had just been opened; the Hôtel Corot, with Gothic furnishings similar to the "Chat Noir" in Paris.

Arriving at the inn he alighted and walked through a wide door into a spacious room furnished with oak tables and antiquated stools that seemed to await the coming of revelers of a bygone age. At the back of the room, a woman, some young waitress, no doubt, was standing on a step-ladder and hanging some plates on pegs in the wall. The pegs were too high for her to reach them easily, and she stood on tiptoe, one hand

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braced against the wall, the other holding a plate. Her movements were lithe and graceful and her trim figure swayed from side to side in her efforts to reach the pegs. Her back was turned to the door and she did not hear Mariolle enter. He paused on the threshold to watch her and presently some ideas that Prédolé had emitted came back to him. "Well, that's a pretty picture," he said to himself. "That little girl is very graceful."

He coughed. She almost missed her footing at the sound, but as soon as she had collected herself, she sprang down lightly from the ladder and advanced with a smile to greet the customer.

"Monsieur desires?" she asked.

"I want luncheon," he replied.

"A dinner would be better, for it is nearly half-past four o'clock."

"Well, let's say dinner then. I lost myself in the forest."

She enumerated the various dishes kept in readiness for travelers. He made his selection and then took a seat.

The young waitress went to the kitchen, gave the order, and returned to set the table.

Mariolle watched her and thought that, with her skirt pinned pack and her sleeves rolled up, she presented a neat, attractive picture. She was a business-like little person, deft of hand and keen of eye. A table was soon spread for the guest and bread, butter and radishes were set before him.

Her face was as ruddy as an apple and as fresh as a rose-bud, and she had two great hazel eyes; a wealth of chestnut-brown hair was coiled in massive braids around

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her head, its abundance and gloss revealing the vigor of her young body.

Mariolle, desiring above all to forget his troubles, ordered a bottle of champagne which he finished, and drank two cordials with his coffee. As he had only partaken of some bread and a little cold meat before setting out on his tramp, he was soon under the influence of the stimulating effect of the wine and the glow which pervaded his heart made him believe he was gradually forgetting. His ideas and his sorrow seemed diluted and drowned by the sparkling liquid which, in a marvelously short time, transformed his tormented heart into an insensible one.

He walked back to Montigny and retired as soon as he reached the house, feeling very drowsy and exhausted.

Sleep came to him as soon as his head touched the pillow, but he awoke in the middle of the night, with a feeling of depression, as if some nightmare, which he had succeeded in driving away, had stealthily returned to interrupt his slumbers. *She* stood near him, *She,* Mme. de Burne, hovering around his bed, accompanied by M. de Bernhaus. "Tiens," thought Mariolle; "I'm jealous; I wonder why?" Why was he jealous? He understood the reason at once. In spite of his suffering and his fears, he knew that while he was her lover, she had been true to him. True without impulse or tenderness, but true, nevertheless. Now, he had shattered everything and had given her her freedom; everything was at an end. Would she remain without a "liaison?" Yes, of course, for a time . . . And then? . . . Had not her very faithfulness come from the presentiment that, if she renounced him,

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Mariolle, she would, in time, through sheer loneliness replace him by someone else? Are there not many women who keep their lovers through fear that other ones will follow? Besides, a woman like Mme. de Burne would have thought it odious to pass from one man to another, for, although she was too intelligent to submit to prejudice, she was endowed with a delicate moral sense which preserved her from real contaminations. A philosophical society woman, not a prudish "bourgeoise" was she, and although she feared not a secret attachment, her indifferent flesh would have revolted at the idea of a succession of lovers.

He had given her her freedom . . . and now? . . . Now, she surely would take another lover. And this lover would be the comte de Bernhaus. He felt sure of it and suffered beyond words at the thought.

Why had he broken with her? He had forsaken a faithful, amiable, charming woman. Why? Because he was merely a sensual brute who could not understand love without physical emotion.

But was this really so? Yes . . . but there was something else, too . . . There was, above all, the dread of pain. He had fled from the torture of not having his love returned, from the pain which wrung his heart and which could perhaps never be cured. He had dreaded long years of the torment of which he had had only a short experience. Weak, as he had always been, he shrank from this pain as, during his whole life, he had shrunk from any great effort.

Thus he was really incapable of seeing a thing through to the end, of plunging into a passion, as he should have plunged into some art or some science, for

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it is perhaps impossible to have loved much without also having experienced much suffering.

These thoughts harassed him until dawn, when he arose and went down to the river. A fisherman was throwing his bait into the water near the dam. The water was beautifully transparent under the morning sun, and when the man dragged his net in, the slender fishes gleamed like silver through its meshes.

Mariolle felt the peaceful influence of the early hour, and the water that flowed at his feet seemed to carry away a little of the burden that oppressed him. "I really acted wisely; I would have been too unhappy," he thought.

He went back to the house to fetch a hammock he had noticed in the hall. He spread it between two trees, stretched himself out in it and endeavored to absorb his thoughts in the contemplation of the river.

He stayed out until noon, and then went back to the house for lunch. He prolonged his meal as much as possible, in order to shorten the day. But the expectation of letters from the city kept his thoughts busy. He had telegraphed to Paris and sent to Fontainebleau for his mail, but had received nothing as yet; the sensation of being very forlorn was beginning to depress him. Why? He surely could not expect his mail to bring anything pleasant. Only some useless invitations and business communications. Then, why did he look forward to these unknown notes as if they contained his salvation?

Did not a conceited hope that she might write, lurk under his feverish impatience?

He questioned one of the maids:

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"When is the mail delivered here?"

"At noon, monsieur."

It was just noon. Mariolle strained his ears to catch any unfamiliar sound. A knock on the front door almost brought him to his feet. The postman handed in the newspapers and three unimportant letters. Mariolle sat down and scanned the papers, but soon wearied and went out doors. How would he spend the afternoon? He went back to his hammock, but after an hour he felt a strong desire to take a walk. How about the forest? Yes, the forest was delightful, but it was even lonelier there than at home or in the village, which at times, was animated by a little excitement. The intense solitude of the woods depressed him terribly, and brought to mind all the things he was so bent on forgetting. Mentally he recapitulated his long walk of the previous day, and when he came to the little waitress at the Hôtel Corot, he muttered: "Tiens, I think I'll walk to that inn and have dinner there." This idea comforted him. It was at least an occupation, some goal for his aimless wanderings. So he started out at once.

The long village street lay straight ahead of him, with its double row of white houses, of which some were built on the edge of the road, while the others were separated from it by tiny yards where emaciated fowls were diligently seeking food on dirt heaps, and lilac bushes nodded their graceful branches in the soft breeze. Some peasants sat on their door-steps busying themselves with useful tasks. An aged woman with stooped shoulders and yellowish gray hair,—peasants rarely have absolutely white hair,—passed Mariolle, clad in a ragged waist and a scant petticoat that clung

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to her emaciated limbs. She stared at him with expressionless eyes, eyes that had never beheld anything save the simple surroundings of her daily life.

Another, younger woman, was hanging up the wash in front of her cottage. When she raised her arms, her skirt showed her thick, bony ankles covered with coarse blue stockings. Her waist and chest were those of a man, broad and flat, and revealed a shapeless body that must have been horrible to look upon.

"Women! These are women! Here are women!" thought Mariolle, and Mme. de Burne rose before his mind's eye.

There was a woman exquisitely dainty and beautiful, created to attract the eyes of men! Despair overwhelmed him at the thought. He hastened on, to obliterate in rapid motion these tormenting visions. When he reached the inn, the little waitress recognized him at once and greeted him with a pleasant smile:

"Bonjour, monsieur."

"Bonjour, mademoiselle."

"Do you wish to drink anything?"

"Yes, and then I will have dinner."

First they discussed what he was to drink, and then, what he was to have for dinner. He consulted her in order to draw her out. She expressed herself well, in the brief manner of a Parisian and with the same sprightliness which distinguished all her actions.

"Here's a clever little girl," thought Mariolle as he listened to the pretty waitress; looks to me as if she possessed the beginnings of a "demi-mondaine."

"Are you from Paris?" he questioned.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Have you been here long?"

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"Two weeks."

"Do you like it?"

"Not as yet, but then it's too soon to say one way or the other. I was run down, and the country has done me a lot of good. That's really why I came out here. Shall I bring you a vermouth, monsieur?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, and tell the chef or the cook, whichever it is, to take great pains with my dinner."

"Have no fear, monsieur," and she departed, leaving Mariolle alone.

He arose, went into the garden and installed himself in an arbor. Very soon the vermouth was brought to him and he spent the rest of the afternoon listening to the notes of a caged starling and watching the dainty waitress serve other customers and throw coquettish glances in his direction, for she had discovered that "the gentleman" seemed interested in her.

He drank another bottle of champagne and started for home as on the day before, but the dark, cool night quickly dissipated the fumes of the wine and an unconquerable depression crept anew into his soul. "What am I to do? Shall I stay here? Am I condemned forever to lead this terrible existence?" he thought, and that night sleep would not come to him.

The next day was spent in the hammock. Then the constant presence of the fisherman suggested fishing to him. A grocer, who dealt in fishing tackle sold him the necessary paraphernalia and even offered to guide his first attempts. The proposition was gladly accepted, and from nine o'clock in the morning until noon, Mariolle, after almost superhuman efforts, managed to capture three diminutive inhabitants of the stream.

After lunch he set out again for Marlotte. Why?

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To pass the time. The little waitress laughed aloud when she saw him.

He smiled in response, being thoroughly amused at the idea that she recognized him. And he tried again to draw her out.

She was more expansive than on the previous day and he had no difficulty in making her open her heart. Her name was Elisabeth Ledru.

Her mother, a dressmaker, who worked by the day, had died the year before; her father, a bookkeeper, who was always drunk and unemployed and who had compelled his wife and daughter to support him, had suddenly disappeared, when the girl, left alone to sew all day in the cheerless home, had been unable to earn sufficient money to provide him with drink. Elisabeth, wearying of her lonely life, sought employment as a waitress in a lunch-room. There she remained about a year, but, as she was growing ill from overwork, she decided to accept the proposition of the landlord of the Hôtel Corot, who had been a customer, and who wished to engage her services for the Summer along with those of two other young girls, who were to come a little later in the season. This landlord evidently knew how to attract custom.

The little waitress' story pleased Mariolle; after a while he was able to draw from her many pitiful details concerning her home-life and the miserable drunkard who had ruined her own and her mother's existence. She, poor wandering waif, without ties of any kind, cheerful and happy just because she was young, saw the genuine interest this stranger felt for her and bared her heart to him, as unable to check her expansive nature as she was to contain her animal spirits.

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When she had finished her story, Mariolle asked:

"And . . . are you always going to remain a waitress?"

"I don't know, monsieur. Can I guess what will happen to me to-morrow?"

"Still you should think of the future."

For a moment her young face clouded, but the mood quickly passed off and she replied:

"I'll take whatever comes my way! I can't help it!"

They parted very good friends.

A few days later he returned again, and after that he appeared regularly, attracted by the innocent babble of the lonely girl who helped him to beguile away the hours.

But when, at night he would tramp back to Montigny, through the lonely forest, fits of terrible depression would assail him at the recollection of Mme. de Burne. At dawn, his heart grew lighter. At nightfall, distracting regrets and fierce jealousy gnawed his soul. He had received no news. He had not written to anyone and no one had written to him. He knew nothing of what was going on. When alone in the dark woods, he would dwell on the progress of the "liaison" he predicted between his mistress of yesterday and the comte de Bernhaus. Every day this idea took a firmer hold upon his mind. "There is a man," thought he, "who will be exactly what she craves; a distinguished, well-bred, devoted lover, without demands of any kind, who will be delighted and flattered to have been chosen by this fascinating woman.

He compared Bernhaus with himself. Bernhaus, of course, would never display the tiresome impatience, the fits of despondency, the mad desire for tenderness

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that had spoiled their understanding. He would be contented with whatever she chose to accord him, for he was a discreet, adaptable man of the world, and did not, Mariolle felt sure, belong to the race of passionate men.

One day, when he arrived at the Hôtel Corot, he noticed, in one of the arbors, two young men wearing slouch hats and smoking pipes.

The landlord, a thickset man with a florid face, who felt a sincere interest in Mariolle, as a steady customer, came forward to greet him, and remarked:

"I have two new customers since yesterday, two artists."

"Those gentlemen sitting over there?" inquired Mariolle.

"Yes, they are quite well-known. The short one got a medal at the Salon, a year ago."

And, having related all he knew concerning the embryo artists, he inquired:

"What are you taking, to-day, monsieur Mariolle?"

"Send me a vermouth as usual," replied the latter.

The landlord retired. Elisabeth appeared carrying a tray on which stood a glass, a decanter and a bottle of water. At the same moment one of the artists shouted:

"Well, little one, are you still angry?"

She made no reply and when she reached Mariolle, he noticed that her lids were red.

"Have you been crying?" he asked.

She answered very simply:

"Yes, a little."

"What has happened?"

"Those gentlemen over there insulted me."

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"What did they do?"

"They took me for a low-lived creature."

"Did you complain to the boss?"

She shrugged her shoulders sadly:

"Oh! monsieur . . . the boss . . . the boss . . . I know what he is, now!"

Mariolle was irritated.

"Tell me exactly what happened," he said.

She described the immediate and brutal attempts of the two artists upon their arrival, to win her favors, and then began to cry again at the thought of what was to become of her, a poor, friendless girl, without protection, money or resources of any kind.

Suddenly an idea struck Mariolle.

"Would you care to enter my service?" he asked. "You will be well treated in my house, and when I go back to Paris, you shall be free to do as you like."

For a moment she looked at him squarely, with questioning eyes.

And then:

"I will be very glad to come to you, monsieur," she said.

"What are your wages now?"

"I earn sixty francs a month."

A little anxious, she quickly added:

"Besides I get some tips. That brings it up to about seventy francs."

"I will give you a hundred."

Surprised at this unexpected good fortune, she stammered:

"A hundred francs a month?"

"Yes. Does that suit you?"

"I should say it does!"

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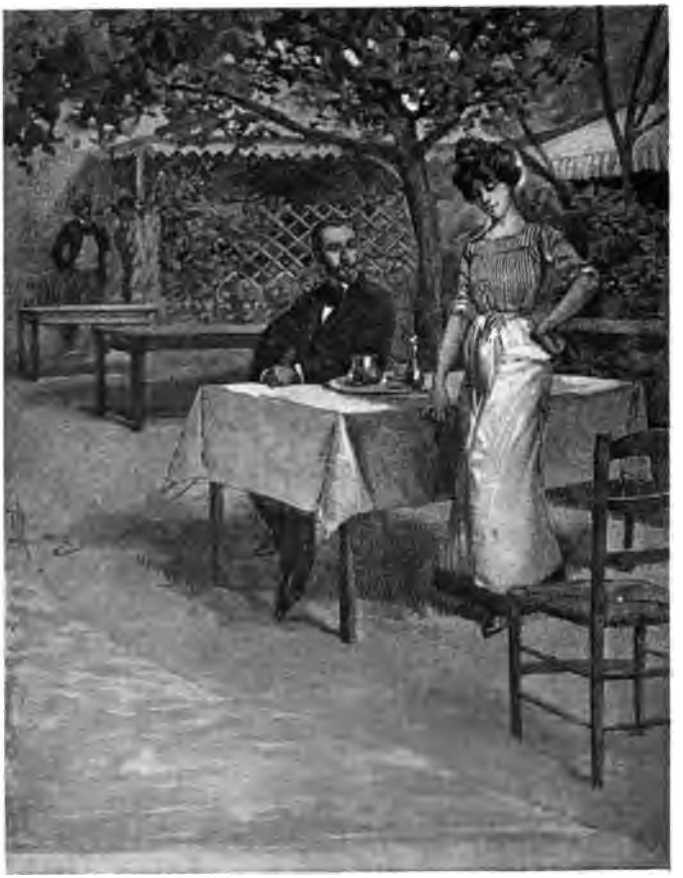

"Tell me exactly what happened," he said.

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"You will only have to wait on the table, take care of my room and look after my clothes and linen."

"Very well, monsieur."

"When will you come?"

"To-morrow, if you like. After what happened here I shall go to the Mayor and leave by force."

Mariolle took two gold pieces from his pocket and handed them to her, saying:

"Here is your retainer."

An expression of wondering delight spread over her countenance and she said in a determined tone:

"I will be at your house to-morrow before noon, monsieur."

II

ELISABETH arrived at Montigny the next day, followed by a peasant bringing her trunk in a wheel-barrow. Mariolle had gotten rid of the elderly housemaid by compensating her generously and the newcomer took possession of a small room on the second floor next to the cook's.

When she appeared before her master she seemed a little different from what she had been at Marlotte; she was more respectful, less talkative, in a word, more the servant, while she had almost been a humble friend under the arbors of the inn.

He told her in a few words what her duties were to be. She listened very attentively, unpacked her belongings and went to work.

A week passed without bringing a change in Mariolle's state of mind. However, he remarked that

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he did not go out so much, for he had no longer a pretext to visit Marlotte and he also noticed that the house seemed more cheerful. The intensity of his sorrow had lost its edge; instead of the acute suffering he felt in the beginning, a hopeless despondency had taken root in his soul, similar to those slow, chronic ailments which so often end in death.

All his past activity, all the alertness of his mind, all his interest in things which, formerly had occupied and distracted him, were dead, replaced by a disgust for everything and an indifference which made it an effort to rouse himself sufficiently to go out. He hardly left the house now, dividing his time between the hammock and the bedroom. His greatest distraction was to watch the fisherman and the river.

After the first days of constraint and reserve, Elisabeth had become a little bolder; noticing, with the intuition that distinguishes women, that all was not well with her master, she would sometimes ask, when the other servant was not present:

"Monsieur is very much bored?"

He would answer with resignation:

"Yes, a little."

"Monsieur should go out more," she would advise.

"It wouldn't amuse me."

She showed him all sorts of discreet and devoted little attentions. Every morning, when he entered the parlor, he would find it filled with fragrant blossoms. Elisabeth, no doubt, enlisted the services of the village boys to obtain the lovely violets, primroses and golden furze which she used to decorate the room.

Mariolle, in his morose and depressed state of mind,

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felt a tender gratitude for these attentions which revealed an ever watchful desire on her part to please him.

He also discovered that she gave more care to her appearance, that she was neater, and that her face had lost its slightly coarse expression. One day, while she was bringing in the tea, he noticed that her hands were greatly improved and that her nails were correctly shaped and immaculate. Another time, he remarked that she wore quite fashionable shoes. Then, one day, after she had gone upstairs to dress for the afternoon, she came down in a charming little gray dress, simply fashioned but in perfect taste.

He exclaimed:

"Why, how coquettish you are growing, Elisabeth."

She blushed to the roots of her hair and stammered:

"I? Why, no, monsieur. I only dress a little nicer because I have a little more money."

"Where did you get that dress?"

"I made it myself, monsieur."

"You made it yourself? When? I always see you working around the house."

"In the evening."

"The material, where did you get that? And, then, who cut it for you?"

She told him that the storekeeper in Montigny had brought her some samples from Fontainebleau. She had selected a pattern and had paid for it with the two louis Mariolle had given her as retainer. As to the style and fit she had had no trouble whatever, for her mother and herself had worked three years for a clothing manufacturer. Mariolle could not keep from saying:

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"It is very becoming and you look very nice, Elisabeth."

And again she blushed to the roots of her hair.

After she had retired, he thought: "I wonder if she is in love with me?" He reflected on the possibility of such a thing, hesitated, doubted, and finally made up his mind that, after all, it was quite probable. He had been kind and helpful to this lonely girl and had acted almost like a friend. Was there anything surprising in the fact that the poor child had fallen in love with her master, after all he had done for her? The thought was not disagreeable to him, for the little waitress was good to look upon, and was very different from an ordinary servant. His masculine vanity, so wounded, so crushed by another woman, felt flattered, soothed, almost healed.

It was a very light, almost imperceptible compensation, but still, it was a compensation, for, when love seeks an individual, no matter whence it proceeds, it is because that individual can inspire the sentiment. His unconscious egotism was satisfied, too. It would distract him and do him good to watch this little heart flutter and throb for him. It never occurred to him to send the child away, to guard her from a danger that had been so fatal to him, to show her more mercy than had been shown to him; no compassion ever enters into sentimental victories.

He began to watch her closely, and soon detected that he had not been mistaken in his diagnosis. Every day, some petty detail would confirm it. One morning, she brushed against him as she was serving his breakfast, and he detected perfume on her clothes, some common scent which had no doubt been supplied

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by the village druggist or the storekeeper. He then presented her with a bottle of his favorite toilet water, of which he always carried a supply. He also offered her fine soap, tooth-powder and daintily scented face-powder. He tacitly aided her in the transformation she was bringing about and which was becoming more and more apparent each day, and followed its development with curious and flattered interest.

While remaining a most faithful and discreet servant, Elisabeth was developing into an enamored woman in whom all the feminine instincts showed one by one.

Mariolle himself was becoming very fond of her. He was touched, grateful, amused. He played with this growing tenderness as one plays, when depressed, with anything that can distract one's attention from oneself. He felt nothing more for her than the vague fascination that draws a man to any pretty woman, be she a servant girl or a handsome peasant, a kind of rustic Venus. He was especially attracted to her by her womanliness. He needed that; it was a confused, irresistible need that had been planted in him by that *other woman,* by the one he loved; she had awakened within him that mysterious and all powerful inclination for the presence and contact of women, for the subtle aroma, sensual or ideal, that emanates from every attractive female, be she aristocratic or plebeian, an Oriental houri with huge black eyes, or a daughter of the North, with steely orbs and a crafty soul.

This tender, untiring, secret devotion, which could be felt rather than seen, soothed his wounded pride and poured balm on his heart. Still, he suffered very much at times. His thoughts, like tormenting flies, would cluster about the wound in his heart and sting it into

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maddening pain. As he had forbidden his man to give his address to anyone who should ask for it, his friends respected his flight, and he was worried by the total absence of news of any kind. From time to time, he would see in the newspaper the name of Lamarthe or Massival among "those present" at a dinner or some other social function. One day, he saw the name of Mme. de Burne, who was described as having been one of the prettiest and best-gowned women at a ball given at the Austrian Embassy. A thrill ran through his whole frame. The name of the comte de Bernhaus appeared a few lines below. And until night, a fierce jealousy wrought havoc in Mariolle's soul. He felt sure now of their "liaison!" It was one of those imaginary certitudes which are much more harassing than a known fact, for they can never be cured.

Unable to stand any longer the uncertainty and the lack of news, he determined, then and there, to write to Lamarthe, who, knowing him well enough to guess the misery of his soul, would perhaps answer his suppositions without even being asked to do so.

So, one evening, he wrote the letter. It was a long, artful, vaguely despondent epistle, full of hidden questions and lyric phrases on the beauty of Spring in the country.

Four days later the postman handed him an envelope bearing the firm, upright scrawl of the author.

Lamarthe sent him a lot of disappointing news items, full of importance to his curiosity. He spoke of a lot of people and, without mentioning Mme. de Burne and Bernhaus more frequently than the others, managed, nevertheless, to make them stand forth pre-eminently, by

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one of the literary tricks customary with him, and which drew his readers' attention just to the point he desired, without revealing the slightest design to do so.

From this letter, Mariolle concluded that all his suspicions had at least a basis. His fears would be realized to-morrow, if they had not been realized yesterday.

The life of his former mistress was just as gay, just as brilliant as it had always been. People had commented on his sudden disappearance with indifferent curiosity. They thought he was weary of Paris and had sought a change in some distant place.

After reading the letter, he remained stretched in the hammock all day. At dinner, he could not swallow his food, and when he went to bed he could not sleep; all that night he had fever. The following morning, he felt so discouraged, so depressed, so weary of his monotonous existence between the deep, silent forest and the little stream flowing past the house, that he decided to spend the day in bed.

When Elisabeth, summoned by a bell, appeared on the threshold of the bedroom, she started back in surprise, grew suddenly pale and gasped:

"Is monsieur ill?"

"Yes, a little."

"Shall I send for the doctor?"

"No, I am subject to these spells."

"What can I do for monsieur?"

He ordered his daily bath, some eggs for breakfast and tea during the day. But, toward one o'clock he was seized with such "ennui," that he felt like leaving his bed. Elisabeth, whom he summoned constantly to his bedside through a sort of nervous whim, finding

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that he was restless and peevish, and desiring above all things to be helpful and agreeable, suggested in a trembling voice to read aloud to him.

"Can you read well?" he demanded.

"Yes, monsieur; in the public schools I won all the elocution prizes and I used to read so many books to mother that I've forgotten the titles."

Mariolle's curiosity was aroused and he bade her go into his studio and fetch the book he preferred to all those that had been sent to him: *Manon Lescaut.*

She propped him up in bed with pillows behind his back, smoothed the counterpane, took a chair and began to read. She read very well, and appeared to have a special gift for the proper accentuation and intonation of words. From the start, she became interested in the narrative and exhibited so much feeling that Mariolle interrupted her from time to time to question her and hear her opinion of the book.

Through the open window came a mild breeze laden with the perfume of the garden; several nightingales hidden in the bushes poured forth their crystal notes to their mates, for it was the season of universal love.

André watched the young girl as she followed with shining eyes the interesting adventures of the fascinating courtesan and her lover.

She replied with innate sense to all the questions he put to her regarding sentiment and passion, sense that was a trifle dimmed by her common education but which was, nevertheless, keen and correct.

And he thought: "If that little girl were educated she would be very bright."

Her presence proved really beneficial to him during that warm, peaceful afternoon and mingled strangely

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in his mind with the mysterious fascinations of that *Manon* who is one of the oddest and most alluring of all the heroines evoked by human imagination.

He was soothed by Elisabeth's voice; captivated by the familiar tale and he dreamed of having a mistress as beautiful and fickle as the one des Grieux had, a mistress who would be both faithless and constant, human and tempting even in the midst of her infamous deeds, who would be able to make a man feel the whole gamut of passion, from tenderness to furious hatred, from jealousy to maddening desire.

Ah! if the woman he had left had only had in her blood the amorous and sensual perfidy of that provoking courtesan, he might never have gone away! Manon was inconstant, but she knew how to love; she was false, but she was passionate!

After the restful day spent in bed, Mariolle, at night, drowsed off into a light slumber in which all these women were confounded.

As he had had no exercise and was not bodily fatigued, his sleep was very light. After an hour or two, he was suddenly awakened by an unaccustomed noise in the house.

Once or twice before, he had thought he heard footsteps and slight noises proceeding from the ground-floor, not directly underneath his room, but in the laundry and the bathroom. He had not paid any attention to these noises.

But that night, tired of lying in bed without being able to sleep, he listened attentively and heard peculiar rustlings and a sort of splashing. He determined forthwith to find out what it was; he arose, lit a candle and looked at his watch; it was ten o'clock. He

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dressed himself, put a revolver in his pocket, opened his door softly and crept downstairs.

When he reached the kitchen, he was dumfounded to find that the range was lighted. No noises were forthcoming now, but still he thought he detected a sound proceeding from the bathroom, a tiny, white-washed closet just off the kitchen, containing only a porcelain bath-tub.

He approached stealthily, turned the doorknob and pushed the door. Lying in the bathtub, with arms floating lightly on the water, was the prettiest female form that he had ever gazed upon.

She gave a little scream, realizing the impossibility to escape, to hide from him.

Already he was on his knees by the bath-tub, devouring her with ardent eyes and stretching forth his lips to her.

She understood, and suddenly, raising her dripping arms, Elisabeth clasped them around her master's neck.

III

WHEN, on the following day, she brought in the afternoon tea, and their eyes met, she began to tremble so that the tea-pot and sugar bowl danced on the tray.

Mariolle went to her, took the tea things from her hands and put them on the table. Then he said:

"Look at me, little one."

She raised brimming eyes to his.

"I don't want you to cry," he said softly.

As he drew her to him, he felt a thrill pass through

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her, and heard her whisper: "Oh! Mon Dieu!" Then he realized that it was not sorrow or regret for what had occurred, but that it was sheer happiness that made her utter these trembling words. He experienced a strange, egotistical satisfaction to press again to his breast this little woman who loved him so deeply. He felt grateful to her, as a wounded man on a highroad would feel grateful to a strange woman bringing aid to him. His heart thanked her, the crushed, disappointed heart that another woman had ruthlessly cast aside; and deep down in his soul he felt sorry for her.

Seeing how pale and tearful she was, and how her eyes glowed with love he thought: "Why, she is beautiful! How quickly a woman changes and becomes what she should be, according to her desires or the needs of her existence!"

"Sit down," he said to her.

She sat down, and he took her hands in his, her poor, work-stained hands, which she had rendered soft and white for him, and, very gently, with carefully chosen words, he spoke to her of the attitude which they would have to assume toward one another. She was no longer his servant, but would have to retain the demeanor of one for a little while, on account of the world. He would promote her to the position of housekeeper, and she would read aloud to him every day, so as to justify the new order of things. Then, after her new functions had been firmly established and accepted, he would arrange to have her take her meals with him.

After he had finished speaking, she answered simply: "No, monsieur, I am, and I shall remain, your serv-

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ant. I don't want to be the cause of any gossip in the village and I don't want people to know what has happened."

She would not give in, although he displayed great insistence and after he had finished his tea, she carried the tray back to the kitchen.

He followed her retreating form with a fond glance: "Here is a woman," he thought. "All women are equal when we happen to be attracted to one of them. My servant has become my mistress. She is pretty, she may grow to be charming! At any rate, she is younger and fresher than society women or 'demi-mondaines.' What does it matter, after all? Aren't many famous actresses the daughters of janitors? Yet, they are treated like ladies, adored like heroines of story-books, and are often the recipients of princely favors. Is it on account of their talent, which is often questionable, or on account of their beauty, which is often contestable? No. It is simply because any woman can fill the station in life the illusion of which she is clever enough to produce."

That day he took a long walk, and although, deep down in his soul he felt the same suffering, there was nevertheless something within him that made him almost light-hearted. No longer was he alone and deserted. The forest seemed less silent and lonesome. And he looked forward to seeing Elisabeth greet him with a tender smile when he returned.

For nearly a month Mariolle spent an idyllic life in his house near the river.

He was loved as perhaps few men have ever been loved, madly and wholly, like a child by its mother, and a hunter by his dog.

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To Elisabeth he was everything. The stars and the world, intoxicating pleasure and immeasurable bliss. He fulfilled all her ardent and innocent expectations, giving her in a kiss all the happiness that she was capable of feeling. Nothing else existed for her; he was master of her soul, her heart, her flesh and she was like a youth who tastes strong drink for the first time. He went to sleep in her arms, he awakened under her caresses and she clung to him with unimaginable ardor. Amazed and captivated, he sipped this new delight with the impression that he was drinking love at its very source, at the very lips of Nature.

He liked his new mistress, but he missed the former one and remained gloomy and depressed. When he walked along the banks of the river he would think: "Why this worry that I cannot get rid of?" And when Paris rose before his mind's eye, he would experience such uncontrollable suffering that he would retrace his steps and go home so as to escape the torturing solitude.

Then he would lie in the hammock for hours and Elisabeth would bring out a camp stool and read to him. While he watched her and listened to the story she read, his thoughts would wander back to the chats he had had with Mme. de Burne, when he used to spend long evenings with her alone. Then, a foolish desire to cry would come over him and an uncontrollable longing to return on the spot to Paris and to take up his old life where he had left off.

Elisabeth, seeing how depressed he was, would ask: "Are you suffering? I feel that there are tears in your eyes."

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"Kiss me, little one," he would reply; "you would not be able to understand."

She would kiss him, with a feeling that, somewhere, lurked a tragedy beyond her comprehension. But Mariolle, forgetting his torment for a while under her caresses would think: "Oh! a woman who could be like both of these, who could have the love of one and the charm of the other! Why can one never realize one's dreams?"

He would think of all that had fascinated and captured him in his former mistress. Her face pursued him, her magnetism enveloped him, he was like a visionary haunted by a phantom he could not lay: "Am I condemned to be a prey to her forever?" he would exclaim.

He began his long rambles in the forest again, with the secret hope of being able to rid himself of the obsession, of dropping it, so to speak, in some ravine or thicket, like a man who, wishing to rid himself of a faithful dog that he has not the courage to shoot, tries to lose it during a walk.

One day, at the end of a long tramp, he returned to the region of Birch-Trees. They now formed a dense forest, so thick was their foliage, and Mariolle was walking along under the boughs, regretting the delicate pale green leaves he had known at the beginning of his acquaintance with the forest, when, suddenly, his attention was arrested by two trees.

One was a magnificent birch-tree, the other a slender oak, and they had grown together in a close embrace.

To Mariolle it was a striking symbol of his love.

Like some desperate lover, the powerful birch-tree

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wound two of its immense branches around the oak. The latter, held in the iron clasp of the gnarled tree, stretched its smooth, slender trunk far above the top of its aggressor and seemed to regard it with disdain. But, in spite of its effort to escape, to wrench itself free, two deep furrows made by the strong limbs of the birch-tree could be seen in its trunk. United forever to one another by these scars, the two trees mingled their saps and, in the veins of the outraged one, right up to the top, coursed the vigorous blood of its conqueror.

Mariolle sat down in order to study this freak of Nature. His sick soul invested the two trees with a symbolic meaning. Did not these two motionless strugglers represent the story of men's loves?

At last he arose and walked on, sadder and more despondent than ever. Suddenly his eyes fell on a soiled strip of paper lying in the grass; it was a torn, weather-stained telegram. He paused. What happiness or disappointment had this bit of paper brought some human heart?

He could not help stooping and picking it up; with curious and reluctant fingers he slowly unfolded it. He managed to make out several words: "Come . . . me . . . . four o'clock." The dampness had blurred the names.

Cruel and delightful recollections rushed over him as he read; recollections of all the telegrams he had received from *her*, indicating the hour of a "rendezvous" or canceling an engagement with him. Nothing had ever made his heart leap or made his brain whirl like these messengers of joy or sorrow.

Then he realized that he would never receive any more and a sickening sensation of despair came over him.

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Again he wondered what she had felt since he had gone away. Had she suffered and had she regretted the friend she had driven from her, through her heartless indifference, or had she made the best of the situation and felt only outraged vanity?

The desire to know became so strong, so unbearable, that a bold and strange idea entered his mind. He took the road to Fontainebleau and when he reached the town went directly to the post-office, inwardly trembling with excitement, but outwardly calm.

He obtained a telegram blank, wrote with shaking hand the name and address of Mme. de Burne and sent the following words:

"I would like to know what you think of me. It is impossible to forget.

"ANDRE MAROLLE."

"Montigny."

He left the post-office, hailed a carriage and drove home to Montigny; already he was regretting his rash act.

He figured that if she condescended to write to him, it would take two days before her letter reached Montigny; nevertheless, he stayed home the following day, in the hope that she might telegraph.

He was swinging in the hammock under the lime-trees, early in the afternoon, when Elisabeth came out and announced that a lady wished to see him.

His surprise was so great that, for a minute, he could not catch his breath and when he started toward the house, his legs shook and his heart throbbed like a

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sledge-hammer. Yet he did not dare hope that it was she.

When he opened the parlor door, Mme. de Burne, who was sitting on a sofa, rose with a little smile and held out her hand, saying:

"I have come to get more news, the telegram was so short."

He had grown so pale at the sight of her, that a joyous light danced in her eyes. He was so stunned by emotion, that words failed him and he could do nothing but press her hand to his lips.

"Dieu! How good you are," he finally managed to say.

"No, only I don't forget my friends, and I worry about them."

She was looking at him searchingly, with that feminine intuition that uncovers one's most secret thoughts. No doubt her scrutiny proved satisfactory, for in a moment she smiled brightly at André.

Then she said:

"Your hermitage is charming. Can one find happiness here?"

"No, madame."

"Is it possible? In this delightful place, near this beautiful forest and pretty stream? You must be perfectly happy and contented?"

"No, madame."

"Why not?"

"Because it is impossible to forget."

"And is it necessary that you should forget something in order to be happy?"

"Yes, madame."

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"And might I ask what it is?"

"You know what it is."

"And so? . . ."

"And so I am absolutely miserable."

With pitying fatuity she replied:

"I thought so when I received your telegram, and that's why I came out to see you. But I had made up my mind to leave at once were I mistaken."

After a slight pause she added:

"As long as I am not going right back, you might as well show me the place. There's an alley of lime-trees that looks very lovely. It will be nicer to sit there, than here."

They went out. She wore a lavender gown which harmonized so charmingly with the green trees and blue sky that, to Mariolle, she looked like some divine apparition. Her long, slender waist, her fresh, delicate face, her golden hair, gleaming beneath a wide-brimmed lavender hat with a huge ostrich plume circling the crown, her well-shaped arms and her straight, haughty carriage, brought into the little country garden a weird, exotic note. It seemed as if some fairy princess, or some pretty Watteau figure, had walked out of a book or a frame, to display her beauty and grace to a wondering world.

Mariolle, who was looking at her with all the mad passion he had felt for her in the past, surging through his veins, remembered the two peasant women he had glimpsed at Montigny.

She said:

"Who is the young girl who opened the door?"

"My servant."

"She does not look like — a maid."

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"No. She is a very nice girl."

"Where did you find her?"

"Not far from here, in an inn patronized by artists, where her virtue was in constant peril."

"And you saved it?"

He reddened and replied:

"And I saved it."

"For your own benefit, perhaps?"

"Certainly, for I prefer to be waited on by a pretty face than an ugly one."

"Is that all you feel for her?"

"Perhaps she has also inspired in me the irresistible need of seeing you again, for any woman, if she attracts my eyes, be it only for a second, makes my thoughts revert to you."

"That was cleverly said. And is she in love with her rescuer?"

He reddened again. Like a flash the thought came to him that jealousy acts as a stimulus to a woman's heart and he determined to tell at least a half-truth.

So he replied hesitatingly:

"I don't know. She may be. She is certainly very devoted to me."

Mme. de Burne was slightly vexed.

"And you?" she murmured.

He gazed at her with burning eyes and replied:

"Nothing on earth could distract my thoughts from you."

It was a clever thing to say, but she paid no heed to it, because, to her, it seemed the expression of an unquestionable truth. How could a woman like herself doubt such a statement?

She did not doubt it and dwelt no more on Elisabeth.

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They sat down on two camp chairs under the shade of the lime-trees, facing the turbulent stream.

Then he asked her:

"What did you think of me?"

"I thought that you were very unhappy."

"Through my own fault or through yours?"

"Through our fault."

"And then?"

"And then, knowing how excitable and impulsive you are, I thought that it would be best to let you calm yourself, and so I waited."

"What were you waiting for?" he demanded.

"Some word from you. I received it, and here I am. And now we will talk like two serious people. So you still love me? . . . I am not asking you this in a coquettish way . . . I am speaking as a friend."

"Yes, I still love you."

"And what is your idea?"

"How should I know? I'm entirely at your mercy."

"Oh! I have very clear ideas on the subject. But I won't tell them until I have heard yours. Let me know all that has passed through your mind and heart since you ran away."

"I thought of you constantly and that's about all I did."

"Yes, but how did you think of me? In what way, and what conclusions did you reach?"

He related the resolve he had made to forget her, his arrival in the great forest that brought her constantly to his mind, his haunted days and his restless nights; he told her all there was to be told, excepting the love of Elisabeth, whose name never crossed his lips.

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She listened mutely to his story, and she knew that he was telling the truth, not only by the sincere ring of his voice, but by a sort of intuition which told her that she still dominated him completely. And she was glad of this for, after all, she was very fond of him.

He told her that the situation was unbearable, that it was very hard for him to suffer so much, and reproached her anew, but without anger or bitterness, with her inability to love.

He repeated:

"Some women lack the gift to attract, while you lack the gift to love . . . "

She interrupted him with vivacity:

"I have, at least, the gift of being constant!" she exclaimed. "Would you be less miserable if, after loving you ten months, I was now infatuated with some one else?"

"Is it impossible, then, for a woman to love only one man?" he cried.

She answered quickly:

"It is impossible to always love; one can only be faithful. Do you think the delirium of passion lasts for years? No, indeed. As to the women who pass from one infatuation to the other, they simply spend their lives creating romances. The heroes are different, the circumstances and surroundings changeable, the climaxes of various sorts. It's very funny and amusing for them, I'll admit, for the emotions of the beginning, the middle, and the end are always new. But then, when it's over . . . why, it's over . . . for the man, I mean . . . You understand me?"

"Yes," said Mariolle, "there's truth in what you

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have said, but then, I don't exactly see what you want to lead up to."

"To this: No passion persists very long, I mean no ardent, tormenting passion, like the one you are still suffering from. It is a crisis that I rendered very, very painful to you, I know, through my lack of tenderness and expansion. But it's a crisis that will pass off, it cannot last forever."

She paused.

"And then?" he inquired anxiously.

"Then, I think that for a calm, reasonable woman like myself, you could be a very agreeable lover, for you have a great deal of tact. You would, however, be a horrid husband. But then, nice husbands do not, and cannot, exist."

Mariolle, surprised and a little hurt, questioned:

"Why keep a lover you never loved, or no longer love?"

"I love after my own fashion," she replied sharply. "I may lack ardor, but I can love."

He replied with resignation:

"Above all, you require that a man should love you, and show it."

"That is true," she replied. "I adore it. But my heart requires a companion. The conceited desire for the attention of many men does not prevent me from being devoted and faithful and believing that I am capable of giving a man something of my innermost self which I deny to others! my loyal affection, my sincere attachment, the secret and absolute confidence of my soul. I expect to receive in return his love and the rare and comforting feeling of not being absolutely alone in the

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world. It is not love, as you understand it, but surely it is worth something!"

He leaned over and trembling with suppressed emotion, stammered:

"Do you want me to be that man?"

"Yes, a little later on, after your suffering has grown less acute. In the meantime, resign yourself to being unhappy through me once in a while. That will pass. As long as you suffer anyhow, it might as well be near me, as away from me, don't you think so?"

Her smile seemed to say: "Why don't you trust me?" And seeing him filled with passion, she experienced in her whole being a sort of delight, a sort of satisfaction, which made her happy in her own peculiar way, just as a hawk is happy when it alights on a fascinated prey.

"When will you be back?" she demanded.

"Why — to-morrow."

"To-morrow, then. Will you have dinner with me?"

"Yes, madame."

"And now I must go," she said, glancing at the watch concealed in the top of her sunshade.

"Oh! why so soon?"

"Because I must take the five o'clock train. I am giving a little dinner to the princesse de Malten, Bernhaus, Lamarthe, Massival, Maltry and a newcomer, M. de Charlaine, the explorer, who has just returned from Africa after a wonderful trip. Everyone is talking about him."

A brief pang shot through Mariolle's heart. All these names were to him as so many wasp stings. They contained poison.

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"Well," he said, "if you want to start now, I will accompany you a little way."

"Gladly," she answered. "But first, let me have a cup of tea and a slice of toast."

When the tea was ready, Elisabeth was not to be found.

"She has gone on an errand," explained the cook.

Mme. de Burne showed no surprise.

What fear could she feel now about this servant girl?

Then they stepped into the carriage drawn up at the door and Mariolle instructed the driver to take the longest road through the forest and to pass the *Gorge-aux-Loups*.

While they were driving under the tall trees that shed peaceful shadows over the road, Mme. de Burne, seized by that inexpressible sensation with which the mysterious and all-powerful beauty of Nature thrills us, exclaimed: "Dieu! how good it feels! How beautiful and calm the forest is!"

She breathed the pure air with delight, filled with languor and tenderness, and her fingers closed over André's hand.

But Mariolle was thinking: "Ah! yes, Nature! It's like at Mont Saint-Michel!" A train steaming toward Paris passed before his eyes. He accompanied her to the station.

When the train was about to start she said:

"To-morrow night, at eight."

"To-morrow night, at eight, madame."

She got into the train, radiant, and Mariolle returned to Montigny, satisfied, perfectly happy, but worried withal, for he knew that all was not over yet.

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But why struggle? He could not continue to do so. She attracted him through a charm he did not wholly understand, stronger than anything he had ever experienced. To flee from her did not deliver him of her presence, it only made him miss her intolerably, while, if he only could be a little resigned, he would at least receive all she had promised him, for she was not false to her word.

He kept thinking that during their whole interview she had not once thought of pressing her lips to his. She was always the same woman. Nothing would ever change her and he would probably continue to suffer through her the same way as in the past. The recollection of the painful hours he had endured, his anxious waits and the cruel certainty that never would he be able to make her feel what he felt, came over him anew and made him foresee and dread the coming struggle. However, he was resigned to suffer anything before he would lose her again, resigned to the desire that burned in his veins like fire and that never, never could be satisfied.

The rages he felt when, in the past, he sometimes came back from Auteuil alone, were already returning while the carriage rolled rapidly along the forest road shaded by great trees. But suddenly the recollection of Elisabeth waiting for him, so young and fresh and pretty, with a heart filled with love and a mouth filled with kisses, brought a sensation of relief to him. Soon he would hold her in his arms, and, with closed eyes, deceiving himself as one deceives another, he would confound in the intoxication of his senses, the woman he loved with the one who loved him, and thus possess both. Of course, even now, he cared for her, felt that grateful

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attachment of soul and body that the thought of shared affection and pleasures produces in the human animal.

Would not this child prove to be the oasis in the desert, the little spring of water that refreshes the dusty traveler in the arid plains?

When he reached the house, and learned that the girl was still missing, he grew anxious.

"Are you sure that she went out?" he asked of the other woman.

"Yes, monsieur."

He put on his hat and went out himself, in the hope that he might meet her.

After he had gone a few steps in the direction of the village street, he saw, looming before him in the fast gathering dusk, the little old church built on the hill.

A suspicion, a presentiment impelled him. Women have such strange intuitions!

What had she thought, what had she guessed? If the shadow of the truth had passed before her eyes, where else would she have sought refuge but in the little church?

When he entered the chapel it was very dark, for night had fallen. The one little hanging lamp above the altar alone revealed the presence of the divine Consoler. Mariolle walked on tiptoe up the aisle. When he reached the choir, he saw a woman kneeling on one of the low chairs, her face buried in her hands.

She turned around suddenly at his approach. She was weeping.

"Now I understand everything," she sobbed. "You are here because that woman made you suffer and now she has come back to you."

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Moved by the sight of the pain he had inflicted, he stammered:

"You are wrong, little one. It is true that I am going back to Paris, but I am going to take you with me."

"Oh! that isn't true, that isn't true!" she cried.

"I swear it."

"When are you going?"

"To-morrow."

"Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu," she sobbed.

He put his arm around her waist, drew her to her feet and supported her gently to the door. They walked down the hill together and when they reached the river he made her sit down on the grassy bank and crouched down beside her. He could feel her heart beat wildly and her breath come in short gasps and, remorseful for what he had done, he put his arms about her and breathed sweet, comforting words into her ear. Moved by pity and trembling with desire, he did not try to deceive her; and he wondered how, chained to the love of that other woman, whose slave he would always be, he could feel the things he was whispering in Elisabeth's ear.

He was promising her that he would "love her well" — he did not say "love her" and that he would give her a pretty little apartment near his own, and a maid to wait on her.

She grew calmer as she listened, for she did not believe that he would deceive her so basely; she knew by the ring of his voice that he meant all he was saying. At last, dazzled by the prospect of becoming a lady, of being the friend of such a rich and distinguished man, she, a friendless servant girl, Elisabeth was carried

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away by the vision. Pride, gratitude and covetousness mingled with her love for André.

Throwing her arms about his neck, she covered his face with passionate kisses and stammered:

"I love you so! You have taken such possession of me!"

Touched to the heart, André murmured:

"My dear, dear, little girl!"

She had almost forgotten the appearance of the strange woman who had caused her such agitation a little while ago, yet an unconscious doubt still hovered in her mind and, in a caressing tone, she asked:

"Will you really love me as you have loved me here?"

Boldly he answered:

"I will love you as I have loved you here."

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MY WIFE

IT was at the close of a dinner party consisting of men, married men, old friends, who sometimes met together without their wives, like bachelors, as in former days. They had eaten for a long while, and had drunk a great deal, talked on every subject and renewed happy memories of days gone by, those glowing memories that cause the lips to smile and the heart to tremble in spite of oneself.

Someone said:

"Do you remember, George, our excursion to Saint-Germain with those two young girls from Montmartre?"

"Certainly! Of course I do."

And they brought up details, this and that, a thousand little things, the thoughts of which gave them pleasure even now.

They happened to speak about marriage, and everyone said in a serious voice: "Oh! if I had it to do over again! . . . ." George Duportin added: "It is strange how easily you drop into it. You make up your mind never to take a wife, and then in the spring you go away into the country; the weather is warm; the summer promises well; everything is in bloom; you meet a young girl at a friend's house . . . presto! it is done. You come home married."

Peter Létoile cried out: "Just so! that's my story, only in my case the circumstances were peculiar . . . ."

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His friend interrupted him: "As for you, you have nothing to complain of. You surely have the most charming wife in the world, she is pretty, amiable, in fact, perfect; certainly you are the happiest of us all."

The former replied:

"I'm not responsible for that."

"Why not?"

"It is true that I have a perfect wife, but I married her because I had to."

"Nonsense."

"Yes — My story is as follows: I was thirty years old, and I thought no more about marrying than I did about hanging myself. Young girls always seemed to me insipid, and I was exceedingly fond of pleasure.

"In the month of May I was invited to the wedding of my cousin Simon d'Erabel, in Normandy. It was a real Norman wedding. The people sat down at table at five o'clock in the afternoon; and at eleven o'clock they were still eating. On this occasion I was assigned to wait on a Miss Dumoulin, the daughter of a retired colonel, a blonde young woman with a military air, well-formed, fearless and verbose. She monopolized me completely all day long, took me walking in the park, made me dance whether I wanted to or not, and bored me.

"I said to myself: 'I'll bear it to-day, but to-morrow I'll escape. I've enough.'

"About eleven o'clock at night the women retired to their rooms and the men remained to smoke while drinking, or to drink while smoking, if you prefer.

"Through the open window could be seen the rustic ball. Rustic lads and lasses skipped in a circle while they sang in a loud voice the tune of a wild dance feebly

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accompanied by two violinists and a clarinettist who used the top of a large kitchen table as a platform. The tumultuous song of the country people sometimes completely drowned the sound of the instruments; and the feeble music, torn to pieces by their uncontrolled voices, seemed to fall from the sky in shreds, in small fragments of scattered notes. From two huge casks surrounded by flaming torches there poured drink for the crowd. Two men were busy rinsing the glasses, or bowls, in a tub so as to have them ready as quickly as possible to place under the faucets from which ran the red thread of wine or the golden thread of pure cider; and the thirsty dancers, the sedate elderly people, the perspiring girls came there extending their arms to take, in their turn whatever kind of cup they could find, and throwing back their heads took copious draughts of whichever drink they preferred. On one table was bread, butter, cheeses and sausages. Everybody took a taste from time to time; and on the starlit field, this rational and energetic fête was a pleasure to behold and made me want to drink to the health of those huge casks, and eat hard bread with butter and a raw onion.

"A foolish desire took possession of me to take part in their festivities and I left my companions.

I must acknowledge that I was then somewhat tipsy, and soon became quite drunk.

"I seized the hand of a strong peasant girl who was out of breath, and I made her skip around lively until I was breathless. After drinking some more wine I seized another jolly girl and, to refresh myself I swallowed a full bowl of cider, and I began to jump about like one possessed.

"I was supple, the lads were delighted, and watched

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me as they tried to imitate me; all the girls wanted to dance with me and they skipped about clumsily with the grace of cows.

"At last after many dances and glass after glass of wine and cider, I became so tipsy about two o'clock in the morning, that I could hardly stand up.

"I was conscious of my condition and I wanted to go to my bedroom. The château was asleep, silent, and somber.

"I had no matches and everyone had gone to bed. As soon as I was inside the vestibule I was seized with dizziness: I had great difficulty in finding the banister; at last I came across it by chance, as I was groping about, and I sat down on the first step of the staircase trying to collect my ideas.

"My bedroom was on the third floor, the third door to the left. Happily I had not forgotten that. Confident that I remembered correctly, I got up again, but not without difficulty, and I began to go upstairs, step by step, my hands glued to the iron railing to prevent me from falling, and trying my best not to make any noise.

"Three or four times my foot missed the following step, and I fell on my knees, but thanks to the strength of my arms and my great determination, I avoided rolling down stairs.

"At last I reached the third story, and I groped about in the corridor, hugging the walls. Here was one door: I counted 'one;' but a sudden dizziness made me let go the wall and turn round in an erratic circle that threw me against the other partition. I tried to return in a straight line. The passage was long and difficult, but at last I came up against the side wall and

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I once more carefully felt my way along it until I came to another door. To make certain that I was not mistaken, I again counted aloud: 'two;' and I continued walking. After some time I found the third, and I said: 'three, that's mine,' and as I turned the key in the lock the door opened. In spite of my trouble I thought, 'as the door opens it must be my room,' and I advanced in the darkness after closing the door softly.

"I came up against something soft, my couch, and I stretched myself out on it.

"In my condition I was not particular to look up my night table, for my candlestick, or my matches. It would have taken me two hours or so. I would have been that time undressing, and perhaps even then I would not have succeeded, so I did not attempt it.

"I took off my shoes, unbuttoned my vest which felt uncomfortably tight, and loosening my trousers, slept most soundly.

"I must have been sleeping a long while, when I was suddenly awakened by a penetrating voice calling out quite near me: 'What, lazy bones, still asleep? Do you know that it is ten o'clock?'

"A woman's voice replied: 'Already! I was so tired yesterday.'

"Half asleep, I asked myself what this conversation meant.

"Where was I? What had I done?

"My mind wandered, as it was still wrapped in a thick cloud. The first voice replied: 'I will open your curtains.'

"And I heard steps approaching. I sat up completely bewildered. Then a hand was placed upon my head. I made a quick movement. The voice de-

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manded emphatically: 'Who's there?' I took good care not to answer. Two angry hands caught hold of me. In my turn I startled someone, then a terrible struggle began. We fought, overturning the furniture and striking against the walls.

"The woman's voice cried out in a frightened tone: 'Help, help!'

"The servants, the neighbors, and the frightened ladies all hurried to the scene. They opened the shutters, and drew back the curtains. I was grappling with Colonel Dumoulin!

"I had slept on his daughter's bed.

"As soon as we had been separated I fled to my room, stupefied through fright. I locked myself in and sat down, placing my feet on a chair, for my shoes were in the young woman's room.

"I heard a great commotion throughout the château, doors opening and shutting, whispering, and rapid steps.

"After half an hour some one knocked at my door. I cried, 'Who's there?' It was my uncle, the father of the young man who had been married the previous evening, and I let him in.

"He was pale and furiously angry, and he was very severe with me. 'You have conducted yourself in my house like a churl, do you hear what I say?' Then in a softer tone he added: 'What a fool of an idiot you are to let them catch you there at ten o'clock in the morning! You slept like a log in that room instead of going as soon after as possible.'

"I exclaimed: 'But uncle, I assure you that there was nothing amiss, I mistook my door because I was tipsy.'

"He shrugged his shoulders: 'Go along, don't tell

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me any such nonsense.' I raised my hand. 'I swear to you on my honor.' My uncle continued: 'Yes, that's all right, you are in duty bound to say that.'

"I became angry in my turn, and I told him all about my mishap. He gazed at me in astonishment, not knowing what he ought to believe.

"Then he went out to confer with the colonel. I also learned that a kind of court composed of mothers had been formed, and that the different phases of the situation had been submitted to them.

"An hour later he returned, sat down with the air of a judge, and began: 'Whichever way it is, I see only one way out of it for you and that is to marry Miss Dumoulin.'

"I was so frightened that I jumped up.

"'Do that! never in the world!'

"He gravely asked: 'What do you intend to do then?'

"I artlessly replied: 'Well — I shall leave as soon as my boots are returned.' My uncle replied: 'No joking if you please. The colonel has resolved to blow out your brains as soon as he sees you, and you may be sure it is not a vain threat. I suggested a duel, but he replied: "No, I tell you I will blow his brains out."

"'Let us now look at this question from another standpoint.

"'Either you ruined this child — so much the worse for you, my boy, young girls should not be treated thus, — or else you made a mistake because you were tipsy, as you say. Then so much the worse for you. You should not have placed yourself in such a foolish position. Whichever way it is the young girl has lost her reputation, for the explanations of a drunkard are never be-

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lieved. In this case she is the real victim, the only victim. Reflect.'

"And he departed while I cried after him: 'Say what you like, I won't marry her.'

"After this I remained alone an hour.

"Then my aunt came in her turn. She was weeping. She tried every way of reasoning with me. No one believed in my mistake. No one could believe that this young girl had forgotten to lock her door in a house full of people. The colonel had struck her and the wound had been bleeding since morning. It was a terrible scandal that could not be effaced.

"And my good aunt added: 'All the same, ask her hand in marriage; perhaps you may find means of escape while discussing the marriage contract.' This view comforted me. And I consented to write my offer. An hour later I left for Paris.

"The next day I was advised that my suit had been granted. So, in three weeks time, as I could not find an excuse, or evade it in any way, the bans were published, the invitations sent out, the contract signed, and one Monday morning I found myself in the chancel of a lighted church, by the side of a weeping young girl, having previously sworn to the mayor that I consented to take her as my companion — until the death of one of us.

"I had not seen her since, and I glanced sideways at her with illy-concealed astonishment. Well, she was not ugly; no not in the least ugly. I said to myself, 'She's one who will not laugh every day.'

"She did not look at me once until evening, and never addressed a word to me.

"Toward the middle of the night I entered the nup-

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tial chamber intending to tell her my mind, for I was master now.

"I found her seated in an armchair, dressed as for day, her eyes red, and face pale. She arose as soon as I entered and came toward me with a serious air.

"'Sir,' said she to me, 'I am willing to do what you order me. I will kill myself if you wish.'

"She looked so pretty in this heroine rôle, the daughter of the colonel, that I embraced her as I had a right to, and soon saw that I had not been fleeced.

"I have been married five years, and I have never regretted it in the least."

Peter Létoile stopped speaking. His companions laughed. One of them said: "Marriage is a lottery; one should never choose numbers, those drawn at haphazard are the best."

And the other added in conclusion: "Yes, but do not forget that the god of drunkards chose for Peter."

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A MILLION

THEY were a modest middle-class couple. The husband was a government employé and attended strictly to his duties. His name was Léopold Bonnin, and he was a young man whose opinions on every subject were precisely what they should be. He had been brought up in a religious atmosphere, but ever since the Republic had shown a tendency toward a complete separation of Church and State, he had become less strict in his observances. In the office, he would loudly exclaim: "I am religious, in fact, very religious; but only with God; I have no use for the priests." He laid claim, above all things, to being an upright man and, swelling his chest, went about proclaiming the fact. Of course, he was an upright man in the most commonplace acceptance of the word. He would reach the office on time, leave at the stroke of the hour, despatch his work without dawdling and was always most punctilious about money matters.

He had wedded the daughter of an impecunious fellow employé, whose sister, however, was wealthy. Married to a rich man, who was deeply in love with her, she had had no children, a fact which had been a great sorrow to both, and consequently she had no one but her niece to whom her fortune might be bequeathed.

This inheritance was the prevailing preoccupation of the family. It hovered over the household, and even over the government department, in which Bonnin was

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employed. It was whispered around that "the Bonnins were to inherit a million."

The young couple were also childless, a fact which did not distress them in the least, as they were perfectly satisfied with their humdrum, narrow life. Their home was well-kept, clean and thrifty; they were both very placid and calm, and they firmly believed that a child would upset their tranquillity and interfere with their habits.

They would not have endeavored to remain without heirs; but, since Heaven had not blessed them in that particular respect, they thought it was no doubt for the best.

The wealthy aunt, however, was not to be consoled, and was profuse with practical advice. Years ago, she had vainly tried a number of methods recommended by clairvoyants and her women friends, and since she had reached the age where all thought of offspring had to be abandoned, she had heard of many more, which she supposed to be unfailing, and which she persisted in revealing to her niece. Every now and then she would inquire: "Well, have you tried what I told you about the other day?"

Finally she died. The young people experienced a delighted relief which they sought to conceal from themselves as well as from the outside world. Often one's conscience is garbed in black while the soul sings with joy.

They were notified that a will had been deposited with a lawyer, and they went to the latter's office immediately after leaving the church.

The aunt, faithful to her life-long idea, had be-

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queathed her fortune to their first-born child, with the provision that the income was to be used by the parents until their decease. Should the young couple have no offspring within three years, the money was to go to the poor and needy.

They were completely overwhelmed. Bonnin collapsed and stayed away from the office for a week. When he recovered, he resolved with sudden energy to become a parent.

He persisted in his endeavors for six months, until he was but the shadow of his former self. He remembered all the hints his aunt had given and put them into practice conscientiously, but without results. His desperate determination lent him a factitious strength, which, however, proved almost fatal.

He became hopelessly anæmic. His physician stood in dread of tuberculosis, and terrified him to such an extent, that he forthwith resumed his peaceful habits and began a restorative treatment.

Broad rumors had begun to float around the department. All the clerks had heard about the disappointing will, and they made much fun over what they termed the "million franc clause."

Some ventured to give Bonnin facetious advice; while others offered themselves for the accomplishment of the distressing clause. One tall fellow, especially, who had the reputation of being quite a roué and whose many affairs were notorious throughout the department, teased him constantly with veiled allusions, broad hints and the boast that he, Morel, could make him, Bonnin, inherit in about twenty minutes.

However, one day, Bonnin became suddenly infuriated, and jumping out of his chair, his quill behind his

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ear, he shouted: "Monsieur, you are a cur; if I did not respect myself, I would spit in your face."

Witnesses were despatched to the antagonists, and for days the whole department was in an uproar. They were to be found everywhere, in and out of the offices, meeting in the halls to discuss some important point and to exchange their views of the affair. Finally a document was drawn up by the four delegates and accepted by the interested parties, who gravely shook hands and mumbled a few words of apology in the presence of the department chief.

During the month that followed, the two men bowed ceremoniously and with affected courtesy, as became adversaries who had met on the field of honor. But one day, they happened to collide against each other in the hall, outside of the office, whereupon Monsieur Bonnin inquired with dignity: "I trust I did not hurt you, Monsieur?" And Monsieur Morel replied: "Not in the least, Monsieur."

After that encounter, they saw fit to speak a few words whenever they met. And little by little they became more friendly, appreciated one another and grew to be inseparable.

But Léopold was unhappy. His wife kept taunting him with allusions, torturing him with thinly veiled sarcasm.

And the days were flitting by. One year had already elapsed since the aunt's demise. The inheritance seemed lost to them.

When sitting down to dinner Madame Bonnin would remark: "We have not very much to eat; it would be different if we were well-off."

Or, when Léopold was ready to start for the office,

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his wife would hand him his cane and observe: "If we had an income of fifty thousand francs, you would not have to kill yourself working."

When Madame Bonnin went out on a rainy day, she would invariably murmur: "If we had a carriage, I would not be compelled to ruin my clothes on a day like this."

In fact, at all times, she seemed to blame her husband, rendering him alone responsible for the state of affairs and the loss of the fortune.

Finally, growing desperate, he took her to a well-known physician, who, after a lengthy consultation, expressed no opinion and declared he could discover nothing unusual; that similar cases were of frequent occurrence; that it was the same with bodies as with minds; that, after having seen so many couples separated through incompatibility of temper, it was not surprising to find some who were childless because of physical inadaptability. The consultation cost forty francs.

A year went by, and war was declared between the pair, incessant, bitter war, almost ferocious hatred. And Madame Bonnin never stopped saying over and over again: "Isn't it dreadful to lose a fortune because one happens to have married a fool!" or "to think that if I had married another man, to-day I would have an income of forty thousand francs!" or again: "Some people are always in the way. They spoil everything."

In the evening, after dinner, the tension became well-nigh insufferable. One night, fearing a terrible scene, and not knowing how to ward it off, Léopold brought his friend, Frédéric Morel, with whom he had almost had a duel, home with him. Soon Morel became the

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friend of the house, the counselor of husband and wife.

The expiration of the delay stipulated in the will was drawing near; only six months more and the fortune would go to the poor and needy. And little by little Léopold's attitude toward his wife changed. He too, became aggressive, taunting, would make obscure insinuations, mentioning in a mysterious way wives of clerks who had built up their husbands' careers.

Every little while he would bring up some story of promotion that had fallen to the luck of some obscure clerk. "Little Ravinot, who was only a supernumerary five years ago, has been made Chief-Clerk." Then Madame Bonnin would reply: "It certainly is not you who could accomplish anything like that."

Léopold would shrug his shoulders.

"As if he did more than anyone else! He has a bright wife, that is all. She captivated the head of the department and now gets everything she wants. In this life we have to look out that we are not fooled by circumstances."

What did he really mean? What did she infer? What occurred? Each of them had a calendar on which the days which separated them from the fatal term were marked; and every week, they were overcome by a sort of madness, a desperate rage, a wild, exasperation so that they felt capable of committing a crime if necessary.

And then one morning, Madame Bonnin with shining eyes and a radiant face, laid her hands on her husband's shoulders, looked at him intently, joyfully and whispered: "I believe that I am '*enceinte.*' He experienced such a shock that he almost collapsed; and suddenly clasping his wife in his arms, he drew her down on

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his knee, kissed her like a beloved child and overwhelmed by emotion, sobbed aloud.

Two months later, doubt was no longer possible. He went with her to a physician and had the latter make out a certificate which he handed to the executor of the will. The lawyer stated that, inasmuch as the child existed, whether born or unborn, he could do nothing but bow to circumstances, and would postpone the execution of the will until the birth of the heir.

A boy was born, whom they christened Dieudonné, in remembrance of the practice in royal households.

They were very rich.

One evening, when M. Bonnin came home—his friend Frédéric Morel was to dine with them—, his wife remarked casually: "I have just requested our friend Frédéric never to enter this house again. He insulted me." Léopold looked at her for a second with a light of gratitude in his eyes, and then he opened his arms; she flew to him and they kissed each other tenderly, like the good, united, upright little couple that they were.

And it is worth while to hear Madame Bonnin discuss the women who have transgressed for love and those that a great passion has thrown into sin.

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THE PORTRAIT

"WHY, there's Milial," somebody near me exclaimed.

I turned to look at the man designated, because, for some time past, I had wanted to make the acquaintance of that Don Juan.

He was not young. His grayish hair bore a distant resemblance to those fur bonnets that are in use with certain Northern races and his silky beard, which spread fan-like over his chest, also bore a resemblance to fur. He was conversing with a woman and bending over her, the while he spoke in a low, caressing tone and looked at her with eyes full of admiration and homage.

I knew his life, or at least that part of it which was common property. He had been madly in love several times and tragedies in which his name was woven had taken place. People spoke of him as a fascinating, almost irresistible man. When I questioned those women who lauded him the most, they would always say the same thing:

"I don't know . . . . it is magnetism."

He was certainly not good-looking. He possessed none of the features with which we usually endow ladies' men. I wondered curiously what his fascination could be. Was it his intellect? I had never heard anybody quote him or even praise his mind . . . . Was it his glance? . . . . Perhaps . . . . Or his voice? . . . . The voices of some people have irresistible

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sensual qualities, the taste of delicious delicacies. One hungers after them and the sound of their words penetrates one like the flavor of a tit-bit.

A friend of mine passed. I asked:

"Do you know M. Milial?"

"Yes."

"Well, introduce me, won't you?"

A few moments later we were shaking hands and beginning to talk. His conversation was agreeable, very much to the point, but it was by no means wonderful. His voice, in truth, was fine, soft, musical and caressing; still, I had heard more fascinating voices. One listened to him with pleasure, the same as one would look with delight on a pretty brook. No mental tension was required to follow his lead. No "sous-entendu" excited one's curiosity, no suspense kept one on the alert. His conversation was restful, so to speak, and did not excite a wild desire to reply and contradict, nor call for expressions of delighted approval. Besides, it was as easy to answer him as it was to listen to him. The reply sprang spontaneously to one's lips as soon as he ceased speaking and the phrases went straight to him, as if what he had said made them gush forth quite naturally from one's mouth.

But soon a thought struck me. I knew him but a few minutes, yet it seemed to me as if he were an old friend of mine, and that all of him was familiar to me; his face, his gestures, his voice and his ideas.

After a short chat he had taken possession of my innermost self; all the doors stood open between us and, had he invited them, I might have entrusted unto him confidences that one generally reserves for one's most intimate friends.

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There was certainly something mysterious about it. Those barriers which exist between people and that time slowly demolishes through similarity of tastes, feelings and intellectual culture, seemed not to exist between us and no doubt they did not exist, either, between the various other people, women and men, whom chance threw across his path.

After a half-hour's chat we took leave of one another, with the mutual promise that we would meet often, and he gave me his address, after having invited me to take luncheon with him on the following day.

As I forgot what hour he named, I arrived the next day at his rooms in advance of the specified time; he was not at home. An impassive man opened the door and led the way into a handsome drawing room. It was a little dark, but oh! how attractive and dignified! I felt at home immediately. How many times I have noted the influence of surroundings on mind and character! There are rooms in which one always feels stupid; others, on the contrary, in which one feels full of dazzling wit. Some, although bright and gilded, exert a melancholy influence; others, although furnished in mild colors, cheer the soul. Our eyes, like our hearts, have their likes and dislikes, of which often we know nothing, and which they impose upon us quite unawares. The harmony of furnishings and hangings, the general effect of a room, act instantly on our intellectual nature, in the same way that the air of the forest, the beach or the mountains modifies our physical being.

I sat down on a divan hidden beneath cushions and suddenly felt myself borne up, supported and encased by those little feather bags covered with silk slips, as if

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the shape and place of my body had already been marked out on that couch.

Then I looked about me. There was nothing showy in the room; everywhere, the eye rested on handsome objects, on rare and simple furniture, on Oriental curtains that did not look as if they had been bought at the Louvre, but brought from the interior of a seraglio, and, opposite to where I sat, on the portrait of a woman.

It was a half-sized portrait and showed the head and upper portion of the body, and the hands, which were clasped on a book. She was bare-headed, young, and her hair was arranged in two flat bands that framed her white brow. A sad smile hovered around her lips. Was it because her head was bare or because of her absolutely natural attitude, but never, in my whole life, had a picture appeared to me to be so at home in its surroundings. Almost all those I have ever seen, seem to be on exhibition, the lady wearing gala robes, a becoming head-dress, an air of knowing full well that she is posing, first for the artist and then for all those who will gaze upon her subsequently, or assuming a careless attitude, in a cunningly devised "négligé."

Some are standing, with haughty mien, in the full bloom of their peerless beauty. Others smile down upon the spectator from their frames, and all have something, a flower or a jewel, a fold in their gown or a curve in their lip, that one knows the artist has added for effect. Whether they wear hats or mantillas, or nothing save their own tresses, one divines that there is something not quite natural about them. What is it? One cannot tell, as one has never known them, but one can feel it. They seem to be visiting some-

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where, at the homes of people they wish to impress, to whom they wish to appear in the best possible light, and they have studied their attitude, whether it be haughty or unassuming.

What could be said of this one, though? She was at home and alone. Yes, she was alone, for she smiled as one smiles when, all by oneself, one thinks of something sad and sweet, and not as if she were being watched. She was so absolutely at home and alone that she created a void in the large room. All by herself she filled and inhabited and animated it; a lot of people might come in and talk loud and even sing; but she would always sit there, quite alone, smiling her lonely smile; and she alone would lend animation to the room by her glance.

Her glance was unique. It fell straight on me, caressing and motionless, but unseeing.

All pictures know they are being looked upon and they answer with their eyes, with eyes that see, that think and that follow one about, from the minute one enters the room they inhabit, until one departs.

That picture saw me not, saw nothing, although its glance was directed at me. I recalled to mind the strange verse of Baudelaire:

"And your eyes that draw like a picture's eyes."

They did, in reality, draw me in an irresistible manner, they threw me into a strange turmoil, those painted eyes that had lived and that perhaps were still living. Oh! What seduction and infinite charm, like a passing breeze, like an evening sky all pink and lilac and blue and a little melancholy, like the night that succeeds it, came from that dark frame and from those mysterious orbs! Those eyes, those eyes created by a

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few paint-brush strokes, held in their depths the mystery of what seems to be and yet is not, of what can lurk in the eyes of a woman, of what causes love to fill our hearts.

The door opened and M. Milial came in. He excused himself for being late. I excused myself for being in advance. Then I said:

"Would it be indiscreet to ask you who that lady is?"

He replied:

"It is my mother, who died when she was quite young."

And then I knew from whence was derived the irresistible fascination of the man!

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ALEXANDER

ON this particular day, as usual, at four o'clock, Alexander brought to the door of the small house occupied by the Maraballe family, the three-wheeled invalid chair in which he rolled his old paralytic mistress until six o'clock according to the doctor's orders.

As soon as he had placed this light vehicle against the step, in the very best place for the large lady to get in, he re-entered the house, and shortly there was heard within, a very angry voice, the harsh voice of an old soldier, who was swearing most loudly: It was the master's voice, the retired captain of infantry, Joseph Maraballe.

There was the sound of doors slamming, the sound of chairs being overturned, the sound of restless steps, and then all was quiet, and in a few minutes Alexander reappeared on the curbstone, using all his strength to support Mrs. Maraballe who was exhausted after having walked down the steps. When she had, after some pain, seated herself in the rolling chair, Alexander went behind, seized the bar that was used to push the conveyance and wheeled it to the bank of the stream.

Every day they went in the same way through the small city and were respectfully saluted by everyone. Perhaps the greetings were as much intended for the servant as for the mistress, for as she was loved and respected by everyone, he, this old trooper with his

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white beard, his patriarchal beard, was considered the model domestic.

The July sun shone fiercely on the street, flooding the low houses with its dreadful glare. Dogs were sleeping on the sidewalk within the line of shade made by the walls, and Alexander, panting a little, hastened his steps as he wanted to reach as soon as possible the avenue that led to the water.

Mrs. Maraballe was already asleep under her white umbrella, the point of which not being held, occasionally pressed against the face of the impassive man.

When they reached Linden Lane, under the shade of the trees, she awoke, and said in a kindly voice:

"Go slower, my poor boy, this excessive heat will kill you."

This good woman in her unconscious selfishness, did not think that the reason why she wanted to go slower now was because she was shaded by the trees.

Near this road arched by Linden trees the Navette runs a tortuous course between two rows of willows. The gurgling eddies, the water flowing over rocks, the swift turns in the current, all along the walk made a sweet song of running water and made the air cool and damp.

After having breathed and smelled the damp charm of the place for some time Mrs. Maraballe said:

"Well, I feel better. But he is not in a good humor to-day."

Alexander replied:

"Oh, no indeed, madam."

For thirty-five years he had served in this household, first as orderly to the officer, then simply as valet because he would not leave his master; and for the last six years

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he had wheeled his mistress every afternoon along the narrow roads surrounding the city.

The result of this long, faithful service, this daily tête-a-tête, was that there sprang up a sort of familiarity between the old lady and the old servant, affectionate on her part, deferential on his.

He spoke about the household affairs as one does to an equal. Their chief subject of conversation and anxiety was the bad character of the captain, who had been embittered by a long career begun brilliantly, but which, owing to not having been promoted, terminated without glory.

Mrs. Maraballe continued:

"As for being in a bad humor, I should say that he was in a bad humor. He has been so too often since he left the service."

Alexander sighing, finished the thought of his mistress.

"Oh! madam can tell that he is so every day and that he was the same before he left the army."

"That is true. But really the man has not had a chance. He began by doing a brave act which gained him a decoration at twenty years of age, and then from twenty to fifty he could not rise above the rank of captain, although he had every reason to think when he first entered the army that he would at least have been made a colonel by the time he retired."

"Madam may still say that it is his fault, after all. If he had not always been as gentle as a riding whip, his superiors would have liked him better, and shown him more favors. It is not to anyone's advantage to be harsh, one should try to please to be well thought of.

"Besides it is our fault that he treats us as he does;

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for we prefer to stay with him, but it is not so with others."

Mrs. Maraballe thought: "Oh! how this has been going on for years and years," and she brought to mind the daily brutalities of her husband whom she had married so long ago, because he was a handsome officer, had been decorated when young, and had a future before him, as we say. What mistakes one makes in life!

She continued in a low voice:

"Let us stop awhile, my poor Alexander, and rest yourself on a bench."

It was a small wooden bench somewhat rotten, which had been placed at the turn in the lane for the comfort of Sunday strollers. Whenever he reached this place, Alexander used to whistle a few moments as he rested on the bench.

He sat there, and with a familiar gesture of pride held in his hands his white beard which spread out like a fan; he squeezed it and then stroked it in his hand until he reached the point, which he held a few seconds on the pit of his stomach as though noting and measuring once more the great length of this growth.

Mrs. Maraballe recommenced:

"As for me, I have married him and so it is but natural that I should bear his injustice, but what I don't understand is that you have borne with him also, my brave Alexander!"

He moved his shoulders slightly and only said: "Oh! yes — Madam."

She continued:

"Really. I have often thought about it. You were his orderly when I married him, and you were obliged to put up with him. But afterwards, why did you stay

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with us when we pay you so little and treat you so badly; besides which you should have done like everyone else; settle down, married, had children, brought up a family."

He continued:

"Oh! madam, it is different in my case." Then he said no more; but stroked his beard as though he were ringing a bell that resounded within him, as though he were trying to pull it out, and he rolled his frightened eyes like a man overcome with embarrassment.

Mrs. Maraballe followed out her thought.

"You are not a peasant. You have been educated —"

He interrupted her, saying with pride:

"I studied to be a surveyor, madam."

"Then why have you remained with us, and wasted your life?"

He stammered:

"This is how it is! this is how it is! It is the fault of my disposition."

"How the fault of your disposition?"

"Yes, when I once become attached to anyone, I become attached and there's nothing more to be done."

She began to laugh.

"Well, you need not think you can make me believe that the good conduct and amiability of Maraballe has attached you to him for life."

He twisted on his seat, his head very much bent down, and he muttered through the long hair of his mustache:

"It is not for his sake, but for yours!"

The old woman who possessed a very sweet face, crowned — between the forehead and hat — by a snowy line of crimped hair, which was carefully put up in curl-

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papers every day and shone like swans' feathers, moved in her carriage and looked at her servant with the utmost surprise.

"For me! my poor Alexander. How can that be?"

He looked round in the air, then from side to side, and at a distance, just as timid men do when forced to tell disgraceful secrets, then he launched forth with the courage of a trooper who is ordered to fire:

"This is how it is: The first time that I carried a letter to Mademoiselle, a letter from the lieutenant, and mademoiselle gave me twenty cents as she smiled at me, my mind was made up."

She inquired further, as she did not understand him.

"Come, explain it all to me."

Then, like a frightened wretch confessing a crime, he became bewildered, and said:

"I had a sentimental feeling for madam. That's it."

She did not reply, but stopped looking at him, bent down her head and thought. She was a good woman, very upright, gentle, reasonable and sensible.

In one second she thought of the great devotion of this poor being who had renounced everything to live near her, and never mentioned it. She felt like weeping.

Then assuming a graver aspect, but not at all angry, she said:

"Let us return."

He arose, stood behind the rolling chair, and began to push her.

On approaching the village, in the middle of the road they perceived captain Maraballe coming toward them.

As soon as he joined them he said to his wife with the express purpose of making her angry:

"What are we going to have for dinner?"

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"A small chicken and some kidney-beans."

He flew into a rage.

"A chicken, another chicken, nothing but chicken, good heavens! As for me, I've had enough of your chicken. Have you not an idea in your head that you give me the same thing to eat every day?"

She replied, resignedly:

"But, my dear, you know that the doctor has ordered it. It agrees with you better than anything else. If your stomach were not in a bad condition I would give you a great many things to eat which I dare not place before you now."

Then he became exasperated and stood directly in front of Alexander:

"It is all the fault of this brute that my stomach is in such a bad condition. For the last thirty-five years he has poisoned me by keeping his kitchen so dirty."

Mrs. Maraballe quickly turned her head almost entirely round to look at the old domestic. Then their eyes met, and in this one glance, said: "Thank you" to each other.

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NOTES ON A JOURNEY

IT is seven o'clock. The whistle blows; we are off. The train passing over the turnplates sounds like a storm on the stage; then it plunges into the night, puffing, letting off steam, and reflecting red light on the walls, hedges, woods, and fields.

There are six of us, three seated on each bench, under the light of the lamp. Opposite me sits a large lady accompanied by a large gentleman, old married people. A hunchback occupies the left hand corner. By my side is a young married couple, or at least a young couple! Are they married? The young woman is pretty and seems modest, but she wears too much perfume. What kind of perfume is it? I know, but I cannot recall its name. Ah! I know now. Can it be Peau d'Espagne? That gives one no idea of it. But no matter.

The large lady looks at the young lady in a hostile manner which sets me to thinking. The large gentleman closes his eyes. The hunchback is already rolled up like a ball. I cannot see where his limbs are. The only thing noticeable about him is his brilliant glance from beneath a Greek skull-cap with a red tassel. He looks like a small parcel thrown on the bench.

The old lady alone is on the watch, she is suspicious, restless, like a warden whose duty it is to keep order and watch over the morals of those in the railway carriage.

The young people sit motionless, their knees wrapped up in the same shawl, their eyes open, and still they do not converse; are they married?

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In my turn I pretend to be asleep, and I keep on the watch.

Nine o'clock, the large lady is about to succumb; she closes her eyes suddenly, leans her head on her chest, and brings it up with a jerk. The struggle is over. She is asleep.

O sleep, ridiculous mystery which gives faces the most grotesque appearance, you constantly reveal human ugliness. You accentuate all defects, deformities, and blemishes. Every face you touch immediately becomes a caricature.

I stand up and draw a light blue curtain over the lamp. Then I go to sleep in my turn.

From time to time the stopping of the train awakens me. The conductor cries out the name of the city and then we start off again.

Now it is dawn. We are following the Rhone, which flows into the Mediterranean. Everyone is asleep. The young people are in each other's arms. One of the young woman's feet has escaped from under the shawl. She wears white stockings! That is nothing unusual; they are married. It does not smell fresh in the compartment. I open the window to change the air. The cold air awakens everyone except the hunchback who snores like a trooper under his traveling rug.

The ugliness of the faces becomes more and more accentuated in the light of the coming day.

The large lady with her red face and her hair disarranged is a sight. She is casting spiteful glances at her neighbors. The young girl is smiling at her companion. Unless she is married she should first have looked in the glass!

Here we are at Marseilles where we stop for twenty

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minutes. I breakfast. We start off again. The hunchback has left, but we have two old gentlemen instead.

Then the two married couples, the old and the new, unpacked their provisions. Chicken in this package and cold veal in that, pepper and salt in a paper, gherkins done up in a handkerchief, everything to disgust one everlastingly with eating! I know nothing more common, more vulgar, more inconvenient, more ill-mannered than eating in a railway train where there are other travelers.

If it be freezing, open the windows! If it be warm, close them and smoke a pipe, even if you loathe tobacco; begin to sing, bark, and give yourself over to the most annoying eccentricities; take off your shoes and stockings and cut your toe nails; try to pay back these ill-mannered neighbors in their own coin.

The prudent man will take a bottle of benzine, or some kerosene to sprinkle over the cushions, as soon as those near him begin to dine. Everything is permissible. There is nothing bad enough for these boors who poison you by the odor from their eatables.

We travel along by the blue sea. The sun beats down on the coast peopled with charming villages.

Here we are by Saint-Raphael. Down farther lies Saint-Tropez, the tiny capital of the deserted, little known and charming country named the Montagnes of Maures. A large stream, the Argens, which has no bridge across it, separates the main land from this island which is all but a wilderness, where one can walk a whole day without meeting a soul; where the villages perched on the hills, remain as they were of old, with

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their oriental houses, arcades, arched doors, low, and decorated with sculpture.

No railroad, no public conveyance penetrates these wooded valleys. There is only one old-fashioned stage-coach which carries the mail from Hyères to Saint-Tropez.

We continue on our way. Here is Cannes, so prettily situated on the shore of two gulfs, facing the Lerins Islands which if connected with the main land would make two charming resorts for invalids.

Here we come to the gulf of Juan, with its iron-plated squadron seemingly asleep on its waters.

And now we are at Nice. It seems that there is an exposition in the town. Let us go and see it.

We follow along a boulevard that resembles a marsh, and come to a height on which is a building, not very successful architecturally, which resembles in miniature the great Trocadéro palace.

Within are a few people walking about in the midst of a chaos of boxes.

The exposition, which has been open a long while, will be ready for next year.

The interior would be pretty if finished. But . . . it is far from being done.

Two sections especially attract me; the eatables and the fine arts. Alas! here are a great many preserved fruits from Grasse, comfits, a thousand delicious things to eat . . . But . . . they are not for sale . . . One can only look at them . . . For would it not injure the trade of the city to sell them! To show sweetmeats only to give one the pleasure of looking at them, and forbidding anyone to taste them

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certainly seems to me to be the best invention of the human mind.

The fine arts are . . . being got ready. However, some halls are open, and there can be seen very fine landscapes by Harpignies, Guillemet, and Le Poitevin. A superb portrait of Alice Regnault by Courtois, a delightful Beraud, etc. . . . . As for the others they will be seen after they are unpacked.

As one should see everything when visiting a place, I think I would like to go up in the free balloon, and I walk toward the balloon belonging to Messrs. Godard & Co.

The mistral is blowing. The balloon has difficulty in keeping its balance. Then a report is heard. It is the breaking of the cords of the net-work. The public is forbidden to enter the enclosure—and I also am turned out.

I climb into my carriage and look around.

Every second another cord snaps making a peculiar sound, and the brown covering of the balloon is forced through the mesh meant to confine it. Then suddenly a more violent blast of wind strikes it and tears the huge flying ball from top to bottom, so that it beats about like an old rag, burst and collapsed.

On awakening the next morning, I have the newspapers brought to me and I am horrified to read that "the storm which extended to our coast has obliged the directors of the balloons of Nice to let the gas out of the large balloon in order to avoid an accident.

"This way of letting out the gas instantaneously is one of the inventions of Mr. Godard which has brought him the greatest renown."

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

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Oh! brave public!

The whole Mediterranean coast is a bonanza for druggists. One must be a millionaire to attempt to buy even a simple box of pectoral paste of these elegant tradesmen who sell jujube as high as diamonds.

One can travel from Nice to Monaco via the Cornichi road, following the coast. There is nothing prettier than this route cut in the rock, encircling gulfs, passing under arches, and winding around the sides of the mountains through a charming landscape.

Here is Monaco situated on its high rock, and behind it Monte Carlo . . . Hush! . . . I can understand how people who like to gamble adore this pretty little city. But how gloomy and sad it seems to those who do not play! For that is the only pleasure and diversion in the town.

Farther on lies Mentone, the warmest place on the coast, and the most frequented by invalids. Here, oranges ripen, and consumptives are cured.

I take the night train back to Cannes. In my railway compartment are two ladies and a man from Marseilles who persist in narrating tragedies which have occurred on trains, such as murders and theft.

" . . . I knew a Corsican, madam, who was taking his son with him to Paris. It was a long while ago, when the P. L. M. was first running. I got into the same compartment with them because we were friends, and were starting off on our trip.

" The son, who was twenty years old, could not refrain from watching the crowd run for the train, and he leaned out the window all the time so that he might see everything. His father continually said to him: 'Ha! look out, Matheó, you are leaning out too far,

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you may get hurt.' But the lad would not even answer him.

"Then I said to the father: 'Keep quiet, it amuses him.'

"But the father continued:

"Say, Matheó, don't lean out so far."

"Then, as his son did not hear him, he seized him by his clothes and pulled him, trying to force him inside the compartment.

"But just then his body fell on its knees. His head was off, madam . . . it had been cut off by the tunnel. And the neck had stopped bleeding; everything had been scattered along the route . . . "

One of the ladies heaved a sigh, shut her eyes, and leaned on her neighbor. She had become unconscious . . .

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FATHER JUDAS

THE whole country was a surprise, the scenery was grand and well-nigh awe-inspiring, and forbiddingly dreary.

In the midst of a large circle of barren hills, on which grew nothing but furze, and here and there an oak fantastically twisted by the wind, lay a large secluded pond, containing black stagnant water, in which trembled thousands of reeds.

There was but one house by this dreary pond, a small low house inhabited by an old boatman, father Joseph, who made a living by fishing. Every week he carried his fish to the neighboring villages and returned with the few provisions necessary for his subsistence.

I wanted to see this recluse, who suggested that I go with him to take in his nets, so I accepted.

His boat was old, worm-eaten and clumsy. He was bony and thin, and rowed with a monotonous and easy stroke that lulled to sleep one's spirit, already wrapped in the sadness of the horizon.

I imagined myself transported to the earliest period of the world, in the midst of this old-time scenery, in this primitive boat steered by this man of bygone days.

He raised his nets, and threw the fish at his feet with the gestures of a fisherman of Bible days. Then he took me to the end of the swamp and suddenly I perceived, on the opposite shore, a ruin, a tumble-down hut, on the walls of which was a cross, a large red cross,

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which by the last rays of the setting sun, looked as though it were traced with blood.

I asked: "What's that?"

The man at once crossed himself, and then replied: "That is where Judas died."

I was no more surprised than if I had expected this reply. However, I questioned him further.

"Judas? What Judas?"

He continued:

"The Wandering Jew, sir."

I begged him to tell me this legend.

But it was more than a legend, it was a true tale, and had taken place quite recently, for Father Joseph had known the man.

This hut used to be occupied by a large woman, a kind of beggar, and she lived on public charity.

Who had given her permission to inhabit this cabin, father Joseph had forgotten. Well, one evening an old man with a white beard, an old man who looked as though he were two hundred years old, and who could scarcely walk, asked alms of this miserable woman as he was passing by.

She replied:

Sit down, father, all here is free to everyone, for it was given by everyone.

He sat down on a stone before the door. He shared the woman's bread, and her bed of leaves, and her house.

He never left her. His travels were over.

Father Joseph continued:

It was Our Lady the Virgin who permitted this, sir, as a woman had opened her door to Judas.

For this old man was the Wandering Jew.

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This was not known at first in the neighborhood, but it was so suspected, because he had become so accustomed to walking that he was always tramping about.

There was another cause for suspicion. The woman who cared for the unknown man was said to be a Jewess because she had never been seen in church.

For ten miles around she was called "The Jewess."

When the little children of the country around saw her coming to beg, they cried:

"Mamma, mamma, here comes the Jewess!"

The old man and she wandered about the neighboring country, their hands extended at every door, stammering their supplications in the face of every passer-by. They could be seen at any hour of the day in the secluded footpaths, walking through the villages, or else eating a piece of bread under the shade of a tree, during the excessive heat of noon.

And people in the neighborhood began to call the beggar "Father Judas."

Well, one day, he brought back with him two small live pigs which had been given to him by a farmer whom he had cured of an illness.

Shortly after this he stopped begging, for he spent all his time leading the pigs to places where they could find food, taking them around the pond, under the trees, and in the small neighboring vales. The woman, on the contrary, wandered ceaselessly in quest of alms, but she returned to him every evening.

He too never went to church, and no one had ever seen him cross himself before the Calvaries. All this caused a great deal of gossip.

One night his companion was taken with a fever and trembled like a star shaken by the wind. He went to

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the market-town to get some remedies, then he shut himself in and stayed by her side, and was not seen by anyone for six days.

But the curate, having heard that the "Jewess" was about to die, came to carry the consolations of his religion to the dying woman, and to offer her the last sacraments. Was she a Jewess? He did not know. At any rate he wanted to save her soul.

Scarcely had he knocked at the door when father Judas appeared on the threshold, panting, his eyes aflame, his great beard trembling like trickling water, and he cried out in an unfamiliar tongue, blasphemous words, as he held out his arms to prevent the priest from entering.

The curate wanted to speak, to offer his purse and his services, but the old man continued to insult him, and made gestures with his hands as though he would throw stones at him.

And so the priest retired, followed by the curses of the beggar.

The next day the companion of father Judas died. He buried her himself before his door. These people were of so little account that no one thought about them.

And again the man was seen driving his pigs around the pond and on the side of the hills. And often now he begged, as of old, for food. But people gave him next to nothing because so many tales had been told about him. Besides which, everyone knew how he had treated the curate.

He disappeared during holy week and people scarcely gave it a thought.

On Easter Monday the boys and girls who took a

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walk as far as the pond, heard a great noise in the hut. The door was closed; the boys forced it open, and the two pigs fled, skipping like goats, and no one ever saw them again.

Then, everyone stepped inside, and there were seen on the floor, some old rags, the beggar's hat, a few bones, a little dried blood, and what remained of his body in the hollow of a skull.

And the pigs had devoured him.

And father Joseph added:

"This happened, sir, on Holy Friday, at three o'clock in the afternoon."

I asked:

"How do you know this?"

He replied:

"There is no doubt of it."

I did not try to make him understand how natural it was for the famished animals to eat their master, who had died suddenly in the hut.

As to the cross on the wall, it appeared one morning, and no one could tell who had traced it in this peculiar red.

Since then no one doubted that the Wandering Jew had died in this place.

I believed it myself for an hour:

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BLUE AND WHITE

SLOWLY, slowly, over the heavy blue water, transparently, liquidly, blue, my boat, my dear little boat, all white with a blue border, was gliding through the blue light.

The villas, the pretty white villas, gazed out through their open windows upon the Mediterranean, that lapped the walls of their gardens, their beautiful gardens, filled with palm-trees and aloes, trees forever green, and eternally blooming plants.

I told the sailor who was rowing me lazily to stop at the little door of my friend Pol. And I shouted at the top of my lungs: "Pol, Pol, Pol!"

He appeared on his balcony, a little bewildered, like a man roused from sleep.

The blazing noon-day sun was blinding and he raised his hand to his eyes.

I shouted: "Do you care to take a row?"

He replied: "I will be down in a moment."

And a few minutes later he entered my little skiff.

I instructed the sailor to pull out to the open sea.

Pol had brought his newspaper, which he had not read that morning, and lying at the bottom of the boat, he began to peruse it.

I was looking at the coast. As we pulled away from the shore, the entire town rose before us, the pretty white town, that lay in a circle at the edge of the water. Above it rose the first mountain, the first ledge, covered by a great pine forest, dotted with villas, with white vil-

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las, that looked like the scattered eggs of some gigantic bird. The villas became scarcer toward the summit of the mountain and at the very top was one large, square one, a hotel no doubt, so white that it appeared to have been freshly painted.

My sailor was rowing leisurely, like the calm Southerner that he was; and as the sun, the great blazing sun in the middle of the blue sky, hurt my eyes, I gazed at the water, the deep, blue water, churned by the oars.

And I saw, behind the green mountain, away in the distance, the huge white mountain appear. It could not be seen a moment ago. Now, it began to show its great wall of snow, its high shining wall, enclosing with a circle of icy summits, of white summits, sharp as pyramids or round as shields, the coast, the warm, perfumed coast, with its palms and its anemones.

I said to Pol: "There is the snow; look." And I showed him the Alps.

The great white chain unrolled itself endlessly and grew in size with every stroke of the oar. The snow seemed so close, so thick, so threatening, that I was afraid and felt chilled.

Then, farther down, we discovered a straight black line, which cut the mountain in two, there where the fiery sun had said to the icy snow: "Thou shalt not go farther."

Pol, who was holding his newspaper, said: "The news from Pie'mont is terrible. The avalanches have destroyed eighteen villages. Listen to this;" and he read aloud: "The news from the valley of Aosta is appalling. The crazed population knows no rest. Village upon village is being buried beneath the snow. In the valley of Lucerne, the casualties are as numerous

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At Locane, seven deaths; at Sparone, fifteen; at Romborgogno, eight; at Ronco, Valprato, Campiglia, which is buried in snow, lie thirty-two corpses. At Pirrone, at Saint-Damien, at Musternale, at Demonte, at Masselo, at Chiabrano, many deaths have also been reported. The village of Balziglia has completely disappeared under the avalanche. In the memory of man there has not been such a terrible calamity.

"Horrible details are reported on every side: Here is one in a thousand.

"A man of Grosçavallo lived with his wife and two children.

"The wife had been sick for a long time. On Sunday, the day of the disaster, the father was taking care of his wife, aided by the daughter, while the son was visiting a neighbor.

"Suddenly, an enormous avalanche covered the hut and crushed it. A big log cut the man almost in two, and he died instantly.

"The mother was spared by the same log, but one of her arms was pinned under it and crushed.

"With her free hand she was able to reach her daughter, also pinned under the mass of débris. The poor child screamed for help nearly a day and a half. Now and then she would say: 'Mother, put a pillow under my head, it hurts so.'

"Only the mother survived."

We contemplated the mountain, the enormous white mountain that grew and grew, while the other one, the green one, seemed now only a dwarf at its feet.

The town had vanished in the distance.

Nothing surrounding us but the blue sea, which extended under us, and before us, while behind us rose the

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white Alps, the colossal Alps, in their heavy mantles of snow.

Above our heads, a light blue sky suffused by golden sunlight! What a beautiful day!

Pol resumed: "It must be a terrible death, to be buried alive under that crushing mass!"

Gently rocked by the waves, lulled by the rhythm of the oars, far from the land whose white crest was no longer visible, I thought of the poor little human beings swarming over this grain of sand lost in the magnitude of the universe; of the miserable flock of beings mowed down by disease, crushed by avalanches, shaken and terrified by earthquakes; of those poor little creatures that cannot be distinguished a mile away, and that are so vain, so quarrelsome, so foolish, and have but a few days of life. I compared the gnats that subsist a few hours, to the beasts that live a season, to the men who live a few years, to the worlds that endure a few centuries. What is it all?

Paul remarked: "I know a good snow story."

And I asked him to tell it.

He began: "Do you remember big Radier, Jules Radier, the handsome Jules?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, you know how proud he was of his hair, his face, his physique, his strength, his mustache. All his attractions were greater than other men's, in his eyes. And he was a heart-breaker, one of these handsome dummies that are very successful, one does not know exactly why. They are neither intelligent, nor clever, nor refined, but they possess the attributes of gallant ruffians. That is sufficient.

"Last winter, Paris was buried in snow and I went

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to a ball given by a demi-mondaine you know, the beautiful Sylvia Raymond."

"Why, yes, of course."

"Jules Radier was there, having been brought by a friend, and I could see that our hostess liked him very well. So I thought: 'Here is a chap who will not be greatly bothered by the snow to-night.'

"Then I turned my attention to finding a subject of attraction in the crowd of pretty girls.

"But I did not succeed. Not every man is a Jules Radier, and so I left all alone, about one o'clock in the morning.

"As I lived quite near, I thought I would walk home. Suddenly, at the corner of the street, I saw a strange sight:

"A tall black shadow, a man, was walking up and down in the snow, stamping his feet. Was he a lunatic? I approached him with caution. It was Jules. He was holding his pumps in one hand, and his socks in the other. His trousers were pulled above his knees, and he was running around in a circle, like in a riding-ring, soaking his bare feet in the icy mire, seeking the spots where the snow was clean, and white, and deep. And he was jumping around like a crazy man and executing a series of steps like a floor-polisher.

"I was bewildered.

"I muttered: 'Gracious! Have you lost your mind?'

"Without pausing in his evolutions, he replied: 'Not at all, I am washing my feet. Do you know that I have captured Sylvia? What luck! And I believe that I am to be favored this very night. One must strike the iron while it is hot. Of course, I had not

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looked forward to this, otherwise I should have taken a bath.' "

Pol concluded: "So you see that snow has some use after all."

My sailor, tired out, had stopped rowing. Our boat was motionless on the smooth water.

I said to the man: "Turn back." And he took up his oars.

As we neared the coast, the tall white mountain shrank, disappearing behind the other mountain, the green one.

The town reappeared, similar to foam, white foam edging blue water. The villas showed again between the trees. A white line of snow, composed of the mountain-tops that lost themselves to the right, toward Nice, was alone visible.

Then, a lone crest remained, a tall mountain crest fast disappearing behind the neighboring coast.

And soon nothing could be seen but the shores and the town, the white town, and the blue sea, over which my little boat, my dear little boat, glided to the rhythmic splashing of the oars.

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THE LOG-BOOK

STRETCHED at full-length on one of the divans that served also as berths on my friend Berneret's little yacht, I was perusing a log-book while my host was sound asleep on the opposite side of the cabin.

He was a peculiar chap, was Berneret, who had scarcely been off his boat these last ten years. It was a twenty-ton cutter called the *Mandarin*.

Every Summer he cruised around the northern coast of France, England, Belgium or Holland, and in the Winter he would go to the Mediterranean, to Spain, Algeria, Italy and Greece. When on land, he could not endure its immovability and the meaningless twaddle of foolish people drove him to desperation.

There are a number of men such as he, who spend their lives in those long, narrow boxes called yachts. One can see them sailing into the ports at sunset. On the deck stands a man in a blue yachting cap who, for some minutes, surveys the restless activity of the harbor, then he turns on his heel and paces the deck with long, rapid strides until night.

The next day at dawn, when one looks for him, he has vanished; he has gone off again to float, to dream or to sleep — and to be alone.

Six months later, one meets him again, in a different port, under other skies, wandering, always wandering.

Although an old friend of mine, Berneret was a puzzle to me, so that I felt vividly curious about his log-book. I copied three pages of it while he slept.

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Saint-Tropez, May 20th: Nothing. I spent one of those delightful days when the soul seems dead in the living body. A slight easterly breeze carried us from Salin-l'Yères to Saint-Tropez; we sailed slowly and regularly over a flat, blue sea. I wanted to bathe in it and feel the cool caress of the water on my skin.

At five, the *Mandarin* sailing before the wind to reach the the bay of Grimaud, tacked about and entered the harbor. The wind had fallen, but the cutter was making good headway. We passed two tartans and one schooner going the same way.

The bay of Grimaud looks like a beautiful lake surrounded by mountains covered with pine forests.

Saint-Tropez lies to the left and Saint-Maxime to the right. In the back is Grimaud, an old city partly built by the Moors around a pointed mountain that is topped by the ancient castle of the Grimaldis. Spent an excellent night at Saint-Tropez.

May 21: Weighed anchor at three in the morning, to take advantage of the breeze; but it was hardly more than a breath which only carried us to sea and then quickly subsided. At eight, we had hardly made two knots and I saw that I would have to spend the night at sea unless I had the *Mandarin* towed.

So I ordered two men into the boat and at a distance of about thirty yards they began towing us. A scorching sun fell on the water and on the deck; the heat was so intense that we could not lift an arm without considerable exertion.

The two men in the boat rowed a slow, regular stroke, like two worn-out machines, which still continue without stopping, although very slowly, their mechanical evolutions.

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Wrapped in an Algerian garment of soft white silk that enveloped my body almost without touching it, I lay on the cushions in the tent at the foot of the mast, and dreamed without interruption for five or six hours.

The older I grow, the more futile human agitations appear to me. When I think that a whole country can be upset, I mean the more intelligent classes, but really the most foolish ones, because, one night, a popular singer was suspected of drinking too much champagne before she appeared on the stage!

About three o'clock in the afternoon, we had doubled the point of Drammond and were heading toward the harbor of Agay.

July 22nd: Left Havre at six in the morning with a stiff N. N. by E. wind. At eight o'clock it blew harder, so I ordered the main-sail furled, keeping only the fore-sail and jib-sail, and plied to windward, keeping the while about five miles from the coast.

At ten the wind fell; I was near Saint-Jouin, not far from Cape Antifer, so we anchored and I went ashore to climb la Valeuse and to lunch at the well-known inn kept by Ernestine.

The rocks of Saint-Jouin are the most beautiful of all the northern coast of France. They look like the ruins of some old bastions. Pretty springs bubble here and there among them.

A narrow path climbs up the side of the straight, white cliff, and a brook of clear, cool water splashes over pebbles and watercresses to the foot of the rock.

Near this charming fountain is a wooden bench where one can sit and rest and drink the sparkling water while looking over the sea, the unbroken line of the coast and the chaos of rocks at one's feet.

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Arrived within a short distance of the bench I noticed that two people were occupying it. They were holding hands, as I perceived by the motion they made to disengage them at my approach. When I got a little nearer, I suddenly recognized the woman.

It was she! But who was he? Well, some other man.

A little later, we had lunched in the same dining-room, I was talking to the hostess, a friend of mine, and asked her: "Who is that young woman over there?"

"Why, don't you know her? Where do you come from, anyway? That is little Jeanne Riga, of the Vaudeville." "Ah! And who is the gentleman?"

"Oh! I don't know him," she replied.

And so I returned to my yacht, thinking all the while with egotistical contentment of this little actress who plays so well, so very well the comedy of love that once upon a time she made me feel quite unhappy. And I felt sorry, very sorry for the men for whom she plays it.

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THE MONASTERY OF CORBARA

A VISIT TO FATHER DIDON

THE Alps are more imposing than the mountains of Corsica; their eternal white tops, their almost inaccessible passes and dizzy abysses, from which ascends the roar of crashing torrents, make them a sort of Land of Terror.

The mountains of Corsica are smaller and of an entirely different character.

They are not as majestic, not as inaccessible, and they do not, even in their wildest parts, present that look of baleful desolation which one encounters everywhere in the Alps.

Then there is always the glorious sunshine; it ripples like water down the mountain-sides, which here and there are densely covered with large trees, that, from a distance resemble moss, or else are perfectly bare, their granite flanks standing gaunt against the sky.

Shafts of bright light steal through the thick foliage of the chestnut-trees, rendering the shade warm, and blistering one's skin.

There are two roads from Ajaccio to the Monastery of Corbara: one winding through the mountains, and the other along the sea.

The first road is through the "Maquis," those dense thickets of Corsica. It winds along abysses into which no one ever descends, dominates rivers almost dry at this season of the year, and runs through tiny villages,

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which cling to the rocks like nests. It passes little springs where weary travelers seek refreshment, and also a number of wooden crosses which indicate that, at those particular spots, men have been shot down and buried.

Wishing to go to Corbara to see Father Didon, I chose the mountain road, feeling sure that I would encounter no hotels, or inns, nor even one of those cafés where, if necessary, a traveler can put up over night. One need only ask for shelter, like in the days of old, and the home of the Corsican will open to any stranger.

After I reached a charming village, Letia, from which one enjoys a superb view of valleys and mountains, I found it impossible to immediately proceed, as the insistence of the Arrighi and Paoli families, who each day devised some new excursion and pleasure to keep me in their midst, prevented me resuming my journey at once.

Having passed through the immense forests of Aitone and Valdoniello, the valley of Niolo, the finest thing I have seen after the Mont Saint-Michel and parts of Balagna, the land of olive-trees, I once more perceived the sea near Corbara.

The scenery is imposing and melancholy. An enormous semi-circular beach, closed to the left by a little sea-port that has been abandoned by the inhabitants, (the fever here depopulates the plains) ends to the right in a small village built on a promontory, Corbara.

The path leading to the Monastery, runs along the base of a large mountain, topped by a cluster of houses perched so high, that one cannot but pity the poor inhabitants obliged to climb so far to their homes. This hamlet is Sancto-Antonino. On the right side of the road stands a little thirteenth-century church, of very

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pure style, a rare thing in a country without national art or monuments of any kind. This church was erected by the inhabitants of Pisano, I was told.

In a bend of the mountain, a short distance from there, at the foot of a conical peak, a large white building detaches itself far above the horizon, the plains and the sea; it is the Convent of the Dominicans.

I was admitted by an Italian Monk, who could not understand me, nor could I understand him, so I took a card, wrote the following sentence, "For the Reverend Father Didon," and handed it to him. He indicated a door to me, and went away. It was the door of the reception-room. I entered and sat down.

The first time I ever met Father Didon was at Gustave Flaubert's. I had spent the day with the immortal author, and, having been asked to dinner, both of us, at about seven o'clock, entered the drawing-room of his niece.

A priest, clad in a white gown, was sitting on the sofa conversing. He had an intelligent face, great, ardent brown eyes, a low, musical voice, and he talked with measured gestures.

When we were introduced I learned who he was, and I recall that he stayed for quite some time and conversed fluently on worldly matters. He appeared to know Paris as well as we did, greatly admired Balzac and was familiar with Zola, whose novel L'Assommoir, was just then creating a sensation.

Since then, I have often seen the popular preacher, a favorite among fashionable women, and I have always found him exceedingly agreeable, a man of cultured intellect and simple manners, unspoiled by his oratorical fame.

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I was thinking of our last meeting in Paris, the day after one of his most successful lectures, when the sound of footsteps made me raise my eyes. Father Didon stood in the doorway.

He appeared unchanged; perhaps he had grown a little stouter owing to the quiet life of the Cloister. He still has the luminous eyes of the apostle and "converter," which are almost as useful as are gestures to the speaker; the same slow smile that wrinkles his cheeks around his wide mouth.

He expected me, for he had been informed by his friend M. Nobili-Savelli, General councilor, who had returned from Ajaccio, of my intended visit.

We talked of Paris, and the love we both bore that wonderful city kept us conversing a long time. He asked many questions, inquiring about everything with genuine interest.

Then I asked him about himself; he arose, and while together, we climbed the hill dominating the Monastery, he told me the history of his life.

"When I first entered this Cloister," he said, "I felt as if I were dead; for, is it not death, to abruptly renounce all that has formerly composed one's life? Then I found out that the mind of man is subtle and hardy; little by little, I grew accustomed to my surroundings, my new life; and now, I have not even the desire to leave it and go away, for I have begun some very long work."

He stopped and gazed at the broad horizon, the blue Mediterranean, glittering under the scorching sun, the high, sharp mountain, the top of which bears a great black cross.

"I am a mountaineer," he continued, "and this wild

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country does not frighten me. Besides, I am always studying, and the fifteen or sixteen waking hours of each day do not appear long."

He walked on again, and when I pressed him closely, he smilingly admitted that he thought one could work better in Paris than anywhere else, on account of the intense intellectual activity on all sides, the constant struggle and desire to outdo, which is so stimulating. Do you never feel, I asked, a strong desire to go back again? —"No," he replied, "I live only through my ideals and my faith. I do not take myself into consideration, I am only a lever. I have a most ardent faith and my only desire is to pass it on, to communicate it to my fellow-beings."

But when I spoke to him of a bishopry, which, according to certain newspapers, had been offered him, he laughed outright. "That piece of news is absurd," he said; "nobody would offer me a bishopry here." Then, serious once more, he added:

"Besides, I am an apostle, and I would not give up Saint Paul's pulpit for the biggest bishopry in the world."

I was anxious to know whether he thought of remaining a long while in his retreat; but he did not know, being, as it were, absolutely unconcerned regarding the future, absorbed in his idealistic faith and deep studies. He viewed the world from a greater distance and judged it from a greater altitude through his love for the truth and hatred for hypocrisy; he nevertheless remarked: "No doubt I will leave sooner than we both think, for we will surely be put out of here before long." It was thus that I learned of the fall of the Freycinet Cabinet.

Dusk was gathering; the sun, fiery red, was sinking

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into the sapphire sea. On our left, a whole valley was filled by the shadow of a mount; the sonorous crickets of warm climes filled the air with their cries.

Father Didon for some time had been looking at the mountain topped by a cross.

Presently he asked: "Would you like to go up there with me?"

I thankingly declined, for I had to go to Calvi, but I asked him whether he intended to go.

He answered: "I go there very often towards the close of day and stay until night. I lose myself in the contemplation of the sea, almost without a thought, and admire with my senses rather than with my mind." He paused a few minutes; then he added: "From there I can distinguish the coast of France."

Just as I was about to take leave, he asked me to visit his cell. It is spacious and all white, and has a window overlooking the sea; on the table were a lot of scattered, closely written papers. I bade him farewell.

A long while afterwards, when I had reached the path that runs along the coast, I turned to take a last look at the Cloister, and raising my eyes to the peak which towered toward the sky, I saw, at the foot of the cross, now almost invisible, a white speck, motionless against the blue sky. It was the flowing gown of Father Didon, who was gazing at the coast of France.

And a great sadness came over me, as I thought of this man, so straightforward and sincere, loyal to his faith, frank, and free from hypocrisy, who passionately defends his cause because he believes in it and hopes in the Church; sent out there, to that lonely spot because he has never taken part in the casuistries of the day.

And I, Reverend Father, when I grow old and wish

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to become a hermit, which I hardly believe I shall, it is to your mountain that I will come.

But Father Didon was not the only monk I was bound to meet during this trip, for the very next day, at nightfall, when I passed through the passes of Piana, I paused, bewildered at the sight of those marvelous pink granite rocks four hundred yards high that have such strange, tortured shapes, and resemble, in the ruddy glow of the setting sun, some weird tribe of fairy creatures, petrified by a supernatural will.

I distinguished, in turn, two tall monks, a mitered bishop, a lion, crouching near the edge of the road, a woman nursing her infant, and a grinning devil's head of gigantic proportions, perhaps the keeper of this fantastic population.

After the "Niolo," the barren and startling solitude of which may not appeal to everyone, the passes of Piana are among the wonders of Corsica; and I believe, one might truthfully say, among the wonders of the world. But who knows them? There are no conveyances to carry one thither, no organized service on this wild, rugged coast; and still, the road that outlines it is far more beautiful, to my mind, than the world famous "Corniche."

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CORSICAN BANDITS

THE pass I was obliged to cross was enclosed between two barren and steep granite mountains. They were densely covered with "maquis" whose pungent odor went to my head. The sun, which had not yet emerged from behind the hills, threw a dusky, pinkish glow over the peaks.

As we intended, that day, to walk fifteen or sixteen hours, my guide arranged to have us join a party of mountaineers who were going the same way, and we proceeded in single file up the steep, narrow path that leads through the "maquis."

Two mules laden with bundles and provisions closed the procession. The Corsicans, their rifles slung over their shoulders, stopped at every spring, as is their custom, to refresh themselves. But, on nearing the top of the mountain, they held whispered conferences unintelligible to me, and considerably modified their rapid gait. Nevertheless, I noted that the word "gendarme" recurred frequently.

Presently we halted and one of them, a tall fellow, disappeared in the woods. After a quarter of an hour he came back and we set off again leisurely; we had covered about two hundred yards, when another man vanished through the bushes.

Much perplexed, I asked my guide what it meant, and he replied that they were expecting "a friend." As the "friend" failed to put in an appearance, however,

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we resumed our climbing as soon as the man who had been sent to meet him, returned.

All of a sudden, with a prodigious leap that landed him in our very midst, a short, swarthy man shot out of the bushes. Like all his compatriots, he carried a loaded rifle slung over his shoulder. He eyed me suspiciously. He was very ugly, as twisted as the trunk of an olive-tree, filthy, unkempt, with red eyelids that partly concealed a squint. All gathered around him, eager and questioning. They seemed to love him as a brother and to venerate him as a saint.

After the greetings had been exchanged we proceeded. We walked rapidly this time, and one of the party, acting as scout, preceded us. I was beginning to comprehend by this time, for I had heard nothing but bandit stories during the past month.

As we approached the pass, a feeling of uneasiness appeared to steal over the men. At last we arrived. Two enormous vultures were circling high above our heads. In the distance, at our backs, the sea shone dimly, veiled by the early mist, and before us stretched an endless valley; not a house in sight, not even a field, nothing but thick underbrush and tall chestnut-trees. Now a certain cheerfulness seemed to pervade the men, and we began the descent.

About an hour later, the mysterious individual who had joined our party so unexpectedly, bade us a fond farewell, shook hands all around, and sprang back into the thicket.

When he had vanished, I questioned my guide who simply said: "He doesn't like the gendarmes."

I proceeded to inquire about the Corsican bandits who are infesting the mountains at the present time.

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I first learned that the mountain-pass we had just left behind us, was often used by the gendarmes as a trap for the outlaws who wished to reach the territory of Sartène, the habitual refuge of the brigands.

At the present time, there are about two hundred and forty of these, who defy the gendarmes, the prefect and the Magistrature. They are not, however, criminals, for they would never rob a traveler. Anything of this sort might expose them to being judged, condemned to death and executed by their own people, who are very ticklish on questions of honor. Indeed, it is almost always an exaggerated idea of honor that has driven these poor devils to adopt the life. When a wife has deceived her husband, or a young girl is suspected of having erred, when a man quarrels over cards with his best friend, and for a thousand similar reasons which civilization readily condones, in this country, they slay the wife, the daughter, the lover, the friend, the fathers, the brothers, the parents, the whole tribe; then, having accomplished this, the Corsican quietly takes to the woods where comrades, who respect him according to the number of men he has killed, provide him with the necessities of life; there the gendarmes seek him in vain and sometimes meet their death at his hands, to the great delight of the peasants, for every Corsican, instinctively, hates the police.

In contrast to these unfortunate creatures, whose violent temperaments have led them into crime, and who live from hand to mouth, there are, in Corsica, some bandits who are rich and happy and live peacefully among the peasants, their subjects; they are the Bellascoscia brothers. Their family history is very strange.

The father was wedded to a childless wife, and, fol-

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lowing the example of the patriarchs of old, he sent her from him and took in her stead a girl from a neighboring family with whom he lived on the mountain-tops where his flocks were pastured.

He had several children by her, among them the two brothers, Anthony and Jacques, of whom I will speak later on. But his wife had a sister who enjoyed making frequent neighborly calls at the house of Bellascoscia. The gallant, too gallant, husband always escorted her home. A son was born to them, and the husband, acknowledging everything to the first wife kept the second one, and built her a separate mansion in order to avoid family quarrels. Then a third sister began visiting the two households, and presently another accident occurred. The poor father had but one alternative and that was to build another home, which he did forthwith, and everyone lived happily and in peace. He had, all told, about thirty descendants, who, in turn, produced several hundred children. This family inhabits part of the village of Bocognano and its environs.

Two of the sons, Anthony and Jacques, took up their abode in the mountains early, for rather slight motives. The first one had refused to serve in the army, and the second one had eloped with a girl coveted by one of his brothers. From the time of their disappearance, they dominated the country without the slightest opposition.

Three hundred thousand francs is the sum that is quoted as having been spent by the government to capture them. For years they have been hunted down unmercifully, but always without success. Entire detachments of gendarmes would start out, headed by their officers, to search the country; they would camp in the villages, surround the mountains where they thought the

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outlaws were hiding. In the meantime, the Bellascoscia brothers were quietly sitting on a nearby elevation, following with much interest the maneuvers of their pursuers. Then, tiring of the diversion, they would climb down to the plains, meet the detachment that was bringing supplies to the gendarmes, take possession of the laden mules, and calm the disgruntled conductors, by giving them a regular requisition, signed "Bellascoscia," to be handed to the commissariat officer.

A hundred times they have come within an ace of arrest, a hundred times they have baffled their pursuers by their courage, their skill, their coolness seconded by the complicity of the whole region filled with their relatives.

One day, however, the youngest one, Jacques, had been betrayed. He was to go, at a certain hour, to measure some wood he had had cut, and the gendarmes, hidden about twenty feet from the designated place, were ready to fall upon him.

They spied him in the valley, slowly walking with his hands behind his back, and without waiting for him to get closer, opened fire on him. They were so far away that the shots sounded like the cracking of a whip and the man turned involuntarily to look for the teamster; instead, he found a yellow shoulder-belt; he sprang behind a tree and immediately took in the situation. After a moment, everything grew quiet again.

He was rather nervous, for he imagined that some sort of a trap had been set for him. And then, in a little while he perceived the detachment of gendarmes quietly marching home to the barracks, their empty guns on their shoulders.

So he went and measured his wood.

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The two brothers are rich; they buy property under assumed names, and exploit even, it is said, the State forests. Any cattle that strays to their pastures belongs to them, and bold indeed the man who would dare claim them.

They render services to many persons; and of course they are highly paid.

Their revenge is prompt and capital. But they are always perfectly courteous to strangers.

The latter visit them quite frequently, and the Bellascoscians extend them a hearty welcome.

The elder brother, Anthony, is tall, and dark, and has grayish hair; he wears a full beard, and appears to be quite a good fellow. The youngest, Jacques, is fair, and shorter than his brother; his keen eyes reveal his intelligence and, in fact, he possesses a marked degree of ability. He is the more active of the two and also the most feared.

Several years ago, a young lady, a Parisian, wanted to see him; so she started on the journey accompanied by a male relative.

The meeting took place in a deep ravine, in the depths of the woods and the girl, with that foolish enthusiasm which renders marriage so dangerous, immediately became infatuated with the bandit. Just to think of it! Here was a man who slept under the open sky, and never took off his clothes, and killed men by the score, and made faces at the government agents! They lunched together and then started off on a walk. The relative by this time was groaning and trembling. But the girl, clinging to the brigand's arm, was carried away with delight.

What a wonderful dream! To have a real bandit to

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one's self for a whole day, from dawn till dusk. He told her Corsican love stories in which the stiletto always plays an important part; he spoke to her of a teacher, who had fallen in love with him, and the touchwood, which, in some women, takes the place of brains, got so excited that when night came, the girl did not want to let her bandit go. She insisted on taking him back to the village inn, where supper and beds had been prepared for her party.

It took great persuasion to induce her to leave him, and they finally parted with much regret on both sides.

M. Haussmann met Jacques Bellascoscia under rather peculiar circumstances. He was driving in a carriage to Bocognano when a woman presented herself at the carriage door and informed him that the bandit desired very much to see him. M. Haussmann did not care to grant an interview to such a notorious individual. Suddenly an idea crossed his mind.

"I have no weapons," he replied; "consequently, should I be attacked, I could not defend myself; and I have planned to pass by a certain spot at a certain hour."

At the hour designated, a man sprang in front of the horses; the carriage door opened, he jumped in and talked a long while to the improver of Paris, whom he begged to intercede for him with the Corsican government.

One instance among many others will show how revengeful these outlaws are.

Some man, a shepherd, had betrayed one of these bandits, and he was climbing the mountain in the company of the gendarmes to whom he was going to hand over his prey.

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All at once a shot rang out from the thicket, and the shepherd, his head blown to pieces, fell into the arms of the bewildered gendarmes, who searched the vicinity in vain and were finally reduced to carrying the body of their guide back to the town. Those good Bellascoscias, however, are lacking in the most simple literary taste, for their threats are always written in red ink, dated from the "Green Palace," and couched in terms of the most surprising style. "Anywhere the light of heaven falls on you," they say, "our bullets will also strike you."

They live in a deep, terrifying ravine, in the vicinity of the village, whose entire population, almost, is composed of their relatives. Immorality being hereditary with them, Jacques eloped, a few years ago, with the wife of his brother Anthony and kept her. Later, he mated his son, a mere child, with a girl also a minor, who had just left the convent; then, when they reached the proper age, he made them wed.

Many Corsicans know them and are their friends, whether through fear or an instinctive sentiment of rebellion against the government.

Many strangers have seen them, but would not dare admit the fact, as the authorities, unable to capture them, would not hesitate to lay the hand of the law on any poor man foolish enough to confess that he has had dealings with bandits on whose heads a price has been set.

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A PAGE OF HISTORY

EVERYONE is familiar with the famous saying of Pascal concerning the grain of sand that changed the destiny of the world by changing the luck of Cromwell. Chance, then, that governs this world of ours, and its inhabitants, once, through the desperate plea of a woman, decided the fate of Europe by saving the life of young Napoleon Bonaparte, who became the great Napoleon.

It is an unknown page of history (everything concerning the existence of that extraordinary man is history), a truly Corsican drama, that was almost fatal to the young officer, who was then on leave at his old home.

The narrative that follows is authentic in every detail. I wrote it almost under dictation, omitting nothing, changing nothing, and have not tried to render it more dramatic or literary. I have jotted down the plain facts, without the least effort at embellishment, as well as all the names of the individuals and the words they uttered.

A more finished narrative might perhaps be more acceptable, but this is history and one cannot alter that. I received the details from the only man who was in a position to gather them from their sources, and whose testimony was so valuable in the inquest undertaken about 1853, in order to assure the carrying out of the bequests made by the dying Emperor at Saint-Helena.

Three days before his death, Napoleon added a codicil to his will, containing the following clauses: "I

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bequeath," he wrote, "20,000 francs to the native of Bocognano, who saved me from the brigands who intended to murder me; 10,000 francs to M. Vizzavona, the only member of that family who was on my side.

"100,000 to Monsieur Jérôme Lévy.

"100 to Monsieur Costa de Bastelica.

"20,000 to the Abbé Reccho."

An old recollection of his youth, had, during his last moments, come back to him; after so many years and so many wonderful adventures, the impression that one of the first shocks of his life created in him, was still strong enough to haunt him on his death-bed. And so it was that this vision obsessed him, and he decided to leave those supreme gifts to the devoted follower whose name had vanished from his weakened memory, and to the friends who had helped him in terrible trouble.

Louis XVI had just died. Corsica was ruled at that time by General Paoli, an energetic and violent man, a stanch Royalist, who hated the Revolution, while Napoleon Bonaparte, a young artillery officer, then on leave in Ajaccio, used all his family's, as well as his own influence, to bring about a new régime.

Cafés did not exist in that wild country, so every evening Napoleon would assemble his followers in a room. Wine and figs were served and the men discussed the topics of the day and laid plans for the future.

Already a feeling of dislike existed between young Bonaparte and General Paoli. This is how it had arisen. Paoli, having received orders to subdue the island of La Madeleine, entrusted the mission to General Cesari, telling him, it is reported, to bungle the undertaking. Napoleon, made Lieutenant-Colonel of the

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National Guard in the regiment commanded by General Quenza, took part in the campaign, and later inveighed violently against the manner in which it had been conducted, and openly accused the chiefs of having courted defeat.

It was only a short time afterward that commissaries of the Republic, among whom was Saliceti, were sent to Bastia. Napoleon, hearing of their arrival, wished to join them, and sent to Bocognano for his confidential man, one of his most ardent followers, who was to serve as guide.

Both started out on horseback for Corte, where General Paoli was quartered, Bonaparte wishing to see him, for, being ignorant of his superior officer's part in the plot being hatched against France, he defended him even against whispered insinuations; and the animosity that developed later, although it already existed, had not yet manifested itself openly.

Young Napoleon dismounted in the court-yard of the house inhabited by Paoli, and leaving his horse in charge of Santo-Riccio, started at once to find the general. As he was ascending the stairs, a person whom he accosted told him that at that very moment a sort of council, composed of the principal Corsican leaders, all opposed to Republicanism, was being held.

While he was trying to learn more, one of the conspirators came out from the gathering. Walking up to him, Bonaparte exclaimed: "Well, what's the news?" The man, believing him an ally answered: "It's done! We are going to proclaim independence and cut loose from France with the help of England."

Filled with indignation, Napoleon stamped his foot and shouted: "It is treason, it is infamous," when sud-

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denly a number of men, attracted by the noise, confronted him. It happened that they were distant relatives of the Bonaparte family. Realizing the risk that the young officer was running, for Paoli was a man who would not have hesitated to put him out the way then and there, the clan surrounded him and forcibly compelled him to leave the house and mount his horse.

He rode back toward Ajaccio accompanied by Santo-Riccio. At dusk they reached the hamlet of Arca-de-Vivario, and spent the night as guests of the Abbé Arrighi, a relative of Napoleon, who informed him of the preceding events and asked his advice, for he was a man of great judgment and straightforward principles, esteemed throughout Corsica.

They started early the next morning, rode all day and at nightfall arrived at the outskirts of Bocognano. There, Napoleon took leave of his guide, instructing him to meet him the next morning with the horses at the junction of the two roads, and started for the hamlet of Pagiola with the idea of asking shelter of Félix Tusoli, his relative and follower, whose house was near by.

In the meantime, General Paoli had heard of young Bonaparte's call, and learned the violent words he had uttered after discovering the plot, and he instructed Mario Peraldi to set out after him, to overtake him and to prevent him at any cost from reaching Ajaccio or Bastia.

Mario Peraldi got to Bocagnano a few hours before Bonaparte, and went directly to the Morellis, an influential family, devoted to the general. They soon learned that the young officer had been seen in the village and that he was to spend the night at Tusoli's house. Then the head of the Morelli clan, an ener-

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getic, formidable man, knowing Paoli's orders, gave his word to the latter's messenger that Napoleon would not be allowed to escape.

At daybreak he posted his men, occupying every road and issue. Bonaparte, with his host, went to join Santo-Riccio; but Tusoli, who was slightly indisposed, left him almost immediately.

The young officer had been alone but a moment, when a man walked up to him and told him that some partisans of the general were in a neighboring inn on their way to join him at Corte. Napoleon went to the inn, found the men and exclaimed: "Go join your chief, my men; you are doing a great and noble thing." But at the same instant, the Morellis surrounded the house, fell on him, made him a prisoner and dragged him away. Santo-Riccio, who was waiting for him at the appointed place, heard at once of his arrest and ran to a follower of Bonaparte's, named Vizzavona, whom he knew would help him and whose house was next door to the Morrelli's, where Napoleon was being taken.

Santo-Riccio realized the extreme gravity of the situation. "If we cannot rescue him at once," he said, "he is lost; he may be dead before another hour." Then Vizzavona went to the Morellis. They naturally concealed their real intentions, but he succeeded in the end, by diplomacy and eloquence, in obtaining the permission for the young prisoner to come to his house and partake of some nourishment, closely guarded by his captors.

They, in order, no doubt, to better hide their plans, consented to this arrangement, and their chief, the only one cognizant of the general's wishes, entrusted them with everything and went home to prepare for his own

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departure. It was his absence which, a few minutes later, saved the prisoner's life.

In the meantime, Santo-Riccio, with all the devotion characteristic of the Corsican, wonderful coolness and unfaltering courage, was preparing the deliverance of his companion. He enlisted two young men as faithful and as brave as himself; then, having secretly led them to a garden adjoining Vizzavona's house, and concealed them behind a wall, he calmly went to the Morellis and begged to be permitted to take leave of Napoléon, as the latter was going to be taken away.

They granted him the favor and as soon as he was in Bonaparte's and Vizzavona's presence, he unfolded his plans and urged an immediate flight, as the slightest delay might prove fatal to the young officer. All three then went to the stable and pausing at the door, Vizzavona, with tears in his eyes, embraced his guest and muttered: "God be with you, my poor boy, he alone can save you!"

Creeping noiselessly to where the two young men were lying in wait by the wall, they all started to run for their lives toward a fountain hidden in a clump of trees. But they had to pass in front of the Morellis, who, on catching sight of them, started in pursuit.

Their chief, who was in the house, heard their cries, and realizing what had happened became so infuriated that his wife, related to the Tusolis, with whom Bonaparte had spent the night, threw herself at his feet and begged for the young man's life.

Mad with rage, he started for the door, and when she saw her pleadings were in vain, she suddenly grasped him around the knees and, using all her strength, dragged him forcibly to the ground.

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Had it not been for the courage and strength of that woman, Napoleon would have been lost.

Thus entire modern history was changed. The memory of men would not have had all those glorious victories to remember! Millions of human beings would not have perished in battle! The map of Europe might not be the same! And who knows under what political régime we would now be living!

For the Morellis had almost reached the fugitives.

Santo-Riccio, unfaltering, steadied himself against a tree, and facing the foe, shouted to his comrades to run with Bonaparte. "Take him away," he cried, "seize him, bind him hand and foot!"

But Bonaparte refused to move.

They were then surrounded and held while a follower of the Morellis, named Honorato, pressed the muzzle of his gun to Napoleon's head and shouted: "Death to the betrayer of his country!" But at that very moment the man who had received Bonaparte, Félix Tusoli, informed by an emissary of Santo-Riccio, rushed up surrounded by armed relatives.

Seeing the danger and recognizing his brother-in-law in the man who was threatening his erstwhile guest, he leveled his shotgun at Honorato, crying: "Honorato, we will fight this out between ourselves!"

The man, taken by surprise, dropped his gun, and Santo-Riccio, taking advantage of the general confusion and leaving the two factions to settle the matter between themselves, caught hold of Napoleon, still resisting and dragged him away toward the "maquis," aided by his young friends.

A minute later, the elder Morelli, having broken away

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from his wife and a prey to the wildest passion, joined his followers.

In the meantime, the fugitives were escaping through the woods. When they reached safety, Santo-Riccio, despatched the two young men with instructions to meet them the next day with the horses at the bridge of Ucciani.

As they were taking leave, Napoleon approached them.

"I am going back to France," he said, "would you like to accompany me? Whatever my luck is to be, you shall share it."

They replied:

"Our lives belong to you; do with us what you please here, but we cannot leave our home."

So these two simple and devoted lads returned to Bocognano for the horses, while Bonaparte and Santo-Riccio continued on their way through all the obstacles which render travel in mountainous countries so full of difficulty. They stopped once to break bread with the Mancini family. Toward night they arrived at Ucciani and stayed with the Pozzolia, followers of the Bonapartes.

The next day, when he awoke, Napoleon saw that the house was surrounded by armed men. They were the friends and relatives of his hosts, ready to accompany him as they were to lay down their lives for him.

The horses were waiting near the bridge; the little party got under way and escorted the fugitives until they reached the outskirts of Ajaccio. At nightfall, Napoleon entered the city and took refuge with the Mayor, Monsieur Jean-Jérôme Lévy, who concealed him in a closet.

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It was a wise precaution, for the police arrived on the spot the following day. They searched the house from top to bottom, but found nothing, and retired, baffled by the skillful indignation of the Mayor who offered them eager assistance in searching for the young rebel.

That same evening, Napoleon, in a gondola, reached the opposite shore of the gulf, and was handed over to the Costa family of Bastelica, and hidden in the "maquis."

Several days later, the freedom of Corsica was declared, the Bonaparte homestead destroyed by fire, and the three sisters of the fugitive placed in the care of the Abbé Reccho.

A French frigate which was gathering along the coast the remaining followers of France, took Napoleon on board and bore back to the mother land the pursued conspirator, the man who later was to become the Emperor and world-renowned general whose campaigns shook the entire world.

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THE HOME OF COLOMBA

AJACCIO, September 24, 1880.

THE port of Marseilles is flooded with sunshine, and the dock of La Yoliette, where hundreds of vessels are sending their black smoke toward the sky, is full of the excitement and bustle of approaching departures.

Marseilles is the necessary city of this barren, moth-eaten coast. Italians, Negroes, Turks, Greeks and many other nationalities, a population of lawless, homeless creatures, ragged, half-starved, plying dubious trades, greedy for any kind of gratuity, swarm around, making the port a human waste heap composed of the dregs of the Orient.

But a big steamer of the "Compagnie Trans-atlantique," is moving out to sea and letting out a series of prolonged groans, the whistle having been relegated to the past and replaced by the formidable voice that issues from the steaming insides of the monster boat. Very slowly, the ship glides past its companions, also awaiting the signal to sail; she leaves the port and suddenly becoming alert, ploughs into the sea, while Marseilles and the coast are left behind and vanish in the distance.

Night falls; some of the passengers, lying in their narrow berths, are ill and their distressed groans mingle with the roaring of the screw that shakes the hull of the ship. The two eyes of the steamer, one red and one green, shine steadily in the night. Then the horizon

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pales toward the East, and in the indistinct light of the dawn, a gray speck appears on the water. It grows and grows, rises from the sea and stands out against the dim blue of the sky; finally one distinguishes a series of high, barren mountains sharply outlined by the increasing light. This is Corsica, the land of the vendetta, the home of Bonaparte.

A little farther away one can see tiny islands with light-houses; they are the "Sanguinaries," and indicate the entry to the gulf of Ajaccio. This deep gulf is encircled by beautiful hills covered with olive-trees and huge gray rocks, scattered here and there. Then after a while, the white town appears, huddled at the foot of a mountain, reflecting its flat-roofed Italian houses in the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean.

The big boat anchors about two hundred yards from the dock and the representative of the "Compagnie Trans-atlantique," M. Lanzi, cautions the passengers to beware of the rapacity of the longshoremen who attend to the removal of the baggage.

The city, which is pretty and clean, appears to be already prostrated by the ardent heat, in spite of the early hour. The streets are lined with fine trees; there is a sort of atmosphere of welcome in the day and the air is filled with strong, unknown perfumes, all those captious aromas peculiar to Corsica, the remembrance of which brought tears to the eyes of the great Napoleon dying on the rock of Saint-Helena.

One can tell immediately that this is the home of the Bonapartes. Everywhere statues of the First Consul and of the Emperor are to be found, while busts, pictures, inscriptions and street names all remind one of the family.

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From words gathered here and there, on the public squares, it appears that politics is still the all important topic. Passions are being aroused, the people still believe religiously in the things that have now scarcely more interest for us than some well-executed card tricks. Really, Corsica is very much behind the times; still one would imagine that some event was in preparation. One meets more decorated men than on the boulevard des Italiens and the drinkers in the Café Solférino direct belligerent looks at the drinkers in the Café Roi-Jérôme. The latter look quite war-like too, but they suddenly arise to a man, and bow with great respect as a gentleman approaches. He looks back . . . one almost imagines — he is Count Benedetti! And here come M. M. Pietri, Galloni d'Istria, Count Multedo and twenty other lesser lights of the bonapartist army.

What is the matter? Is Corsica planning a descent on Marseilles? But now it is the turn of the habitués of the Café Solférino to stand up, to wave their hats, and to shout "Vive la République" at two passersby. Who can they be? I draw nearer and recognize Count Horace de Choiseul and the Duke of Choiseul-Praslin. How does it happen that the deputy of Melun is here? I go back to the Café Roi-Jérôme and question one of the guests who wittily informs me "that lacking a partridge of Melun, one would gladly have a Corsican black-bird." The Count Horace de Choiseul is a member of the General Council and the sessions are about to open.

So here in Corsica, where the recollection of Napoleon is still so vivid, a struggle which will, perhaps be final, is about to arise between the partisans of republicanism and the supporters of monarchy. The cham-

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pions of the Empire are all the old well-known fighters, the Benedittis, the Pietris, the Gavinis, the Franchinis.

The Republican champions also bear famous names here in Corsica, and their leader is the Mayor of Ajaccio, M. Peraldi, who is said to be popular and able.

In spite of the fact that politics are quite foreign to me, this battle is going to be too interesting to be missed, and so I enter the Préfecture with the stream of councilors. A delightful man, M. Follaci, who represents one of the finest counties of Corsica, Bastelica, opens the sanctuary to me.

There are fifty-eight councilors who sit at two long green tables. Twenty-eight are at the right table, and thirty at the left. The republicans will surely win.

A gorgeous individual, representing the government, and wearing a haughty expression, is seated on the right of the chairman, doctor Gaudin.

Let in the public!

The public enters through a reserved door. A mystery!

M. de Pitti-Ferrandi,— professor of law, rises and demands the expulsion of M. Emmanuel Arène.

Who has not seen one of those stormy sessions at the Chamber of Deputies, when the members gesticulate like lunatics, and swear like longshoremen; one of those meetings that fill you with disgust and contempt for politics and politicians?

Well, the first session of the General Council almost took such a turn, but the representatives of Corsica are evidently better bred people, for matters did not get quite so far.

They were all shouting at the same time; some piping in falsetto tones, others bellowing speeches that nobody

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understood. Who was in the right? — Who was in the wrong? — The government declared shortly that any discussion of the topic was illegal and that, if it continued, he would be obliged to leave the premises. However, the Council having decided, on the motion of the left, to vote the discussion, the government, hoping to secure a victory for its partisans, assisted at the vote, as illegal, apparently, as the debate which was to follow; but, as the right came out victorious, he retired followed by his entire party.

When will politics be conducted on a basis of good faith and not, as they are now, for the advancement of a party? Never, no doubt, for the mere word "politics" seems to have become synonymous of arbitrary unfairness, perfidy and accusation.

In the meantime, the pretty city of Ajaccio, surrounded by eucalyptus, fig and orange trees, awaits the indispensable improvements which will transform it into one of the most charming Winter resorts of the Mediterranean.

Attractions for Continental visitors are to be organized, plans are to be studied, funds to be raised, and the anxious inhabitants since a week are waiting to see if the second half of the Council will consent to return to the debating chamber, where the other half, that cannot deliberate alone, is waiting.

The gray mountain tops rise far above the low hills; the perfumes from the "maquis" are wafted every night on the mountain breeze; there are passes, torrents, peaks that are more beautiful to gaze upon than bald-headed politicians and I suddenly remember a delightful preacher, Father Didon, whom I met last year at Flaubert's house.

Supposing I should go to see Father Didon?

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THE ORIENT

AUTUMN is here! I never feel this first breath of Winter without thinking of my friend who lives on the far-away frontier of Asia.

The last time that I went to his house, I knew that I never would see him again. It was three years ago, toward the end of September. I found him stretched on a divan, wrapped in the maze of an opium dream. He held out his hand to me without moving, and said: "Stay with me, and talk to me; I will answer you once in a while, but I shall not move, for you know that after having swallowed the drug one should keep quiet."

I sat down, and began talking to him of a thousand different things, detailing the gossip of Paris and the boulevards.

Presently he spoke: "You do not interest me in the least; I can only think of sunlit lands now! Ah! how poor Gautier must have suffered, forever haunted by the desire of the Orient. You cannot imagine what it is, how this land takes a hold on you, captivates you, penetrates your innermost being. It enters into you through your eyes, your very pores with its manifold, irresistible seductions; unrelentingly, no matter in what part of the world chance may have cast you, an invisible thread draws you toward it. I take opium in order to dream of it while in the delightful stupor the drug creates."

His eyes closed and he was silent.

"I queried: "What is so agreeable about that

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poison? What physical enjoyment does it procure to make a man use it until it kills him?"

He replied: It is not mere physical enjoyment; it is something more, and better. I am very often depressed, I hate life. Its hardships and sharp angles wound me daily. Opium is the consolation for everything; it induces you to make the best of everything. Are you familiar with the state of mind that I might designate as constant irritation? I live habitually in that state. Two things only can cure me: opium or the East. No sooner have I swallowed the opium than I lie down, and wait. Sometimes I wait one hour, sometimes two. Then, all at once, I feel slight tremors in my hands and feet; not exactly cramps, but a sort of vibrative numbness. Little by little, I experience the exquisite sensation of having my limbs depart from me. It feels as if they were being removed; the sensation increases, creeps higher, and invades my whole being. I have no body. A kind of pleasant remembrance of it is all that remains. I have only a head, and my head works. I think. I think with a material and infinite enjoyment, with an incomparable clearness, and an amazing perspicacity. I reason, deduct, understand everything. I discover ideas which never before had entered my mind; I descend into unexplored depths, I scale wonderful heights; I drift in an Ocean of Thought, and experience the matchless enjoyment, the ideal happiness of this pure and serene intoxication of mere mind."

He was silent once more, and again closed his lids. I replied: "Your desire for the Orient has its being in this constant intoxication. You live in an hallucination. How can anyone sigh for that barbarous country, where

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Mind is dead, and Thought so barren it does not reach beyond the narrow confines of everyday life, nor make an effort to soar, to expand, and to conquer?"

He answered me: "Of what importance is practical thought? I care only for the dream. That alone is sweet and true.

"Stern reality would drive me to self-destruction, were it not that the dream urges me to bide.

"But you have said that the East was the land of barbarians; hold, it is the land of the wise, the sunlit land, where life flows peacefully, where all angles are smoothed away!

"We are the barbarians, we, the people of the West, who call ourselves civilized; we are odious savages who live the rough life of the brute.

"Look upon our cities built of stone, our hard, angular, wooden furniture. We painfully climb narrow, steep stairways, in order to reach stuffy apartments, where icy winds enter freely, to escape at once through strangely shaped chimneys that establish fatal draughts, strong enough to turn windmills. Our chairs are uncomfortable, our walls naked and cold, and hidden by hideous wall-papers; everywhere we turn, we find angles. Angles on the tables, the mantel-pieces, the doors, the beds. We spend our lives on our feet, or sitting in chairs, excepting when we sleep, and this is absurd, because, during sleep, we cannot appreciate the bliss of lying at full length.

"And think, also, of our intellectual life. It means an eternal fight, a ceaseless struggle. Worry casts its shadow upon us, preoccupations of every kind assail us; we have no time to seek and to pursue the two or three pleasant things within our reach.

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"It is a fight to the death. Our spirit, even more than our furniture, is full of angles, nothing but angles!

"We jump out of bed in the morning and rush to our work in snow and in rain. We struggle against competition, rivalry, hostility. Every other man is an enemy, whom we must fear and crush, whom we must fool. Even love bears, here at home, a semblance of victory and defeat; it is also a battle."

He reflected for a while and resumed: "I know the house that I am going to buy. It shall be square, with a flat roof, and wooden ornaments in oriental style. From the terrace, I will be able to look out on the sea, dotted by the white sails of the Greek and Mussulman ships, that look like pointed wings. The outer walls will be almost without openings. A great garden, where the atmosphere is heavy and scented with the odor of palm-trees, forms the center of this domain. A fountain glints under the trees and splashes into a wide marble pool, the bottom of which is covered with fine gold sand. I will bathe in it constantly, in the intervals between a pipe, a dream and a kiss.

"I will not have a hideous slavey with a greasy apron who, every time she takes a step, reveals the bedraggled edge of a filthy under-skirt. Oh! The way they walk, showing their yellow ankles! It sickens me, and still I cannot escape from it, for they all walk that way, the wretches!

"I will never again hear the tread of their flat feet on the floor, the violent slamming of doors, the thunderous crash of crockery.

"I will have handsome black slaves, draped in white garments, who will run bare-footed over the thick rugs.

"The walls will be soft and elastic like a woman's

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breast, and on the circular divans of the apartments, I will have cushions of every shape, so that I may assume whatever position I fancy.

"And then, when I tire of the delightful ease, tire of my motionless calm and eternal dream, I will have a white or black charger brought to the door.

"And I will leap into the saddle, and ride off, drinking in the sharp air which will cut my face, the stinging air of a wild gallop.

"And I will fly like an arrow over the warm colored earth, which is intoxicating to the vision and as stimulating as wine.

"At dusk, I will ride madly toward the boundless horizon that assumes a crimson flush from the setting sun. Everything takes the same color at sunset, the brownish mountains, the sand, the garments of the Arabs, the white coat of their horses.

"The pink flamingos will rise from the marshes against the pink sky; and I will cry out in ecstasy, submerged in the overwhelming roseate hue of the universe.

"I will not see, all along the streets, men garbed in black, sitting on uncomfortable chairs, sipping their 'absinthe' and talking business. I will not be deafened by the rattling of the 'fiacres' over the asphalt pavement.

"I will no longer know the stock market, the rise and fall of shares, all the useless folderol that fills up our miserable and short existence. Why these worries, and sufferings, and struggles? I will rest, sheltered from the winds, in my sumptuous and sunlit house.

"And I shall have four or five wives in luxurious apartments, five wives from the five parts of the earth,

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who will bring me the taste of the full-blown female loveliness of all the races."

He was silent once more, then he gently murmured: "Leave me."

I went away. I never saw him again.

Two months later, he sent me these three words: "I am happy."

His letter smelled of incense and other heady perfumes.

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THE KISS

MY dearest Darling:

And so you weep from morning to night because your husband has left you, and you ask advice of your old aunt because you believe her to be very wise. I do not know as much about it as you think, and yet I am not entirely ignorant of this art of loving, or rather of making oneself loved, that you are somewhat deficient in. At my age I can acknowledge this.

You tell me that you give him nothing but consideration, sweetness, caresses, kisses. Perhaps the trouble comes from this; I think you embrace him too much.

My dear, we are discussing the most terrible force in existence: love.

Man endowed with his physical strength carries it on by force. Woman, endowed with charm, dominates by caressing. This is our weapon, a formidable, invincible weapon, but one must know how to wield it.

We are, I want you to understand, the mistresses of the earth. To relate the history of love from the beginning of the world, would be to tell the history of mankind. It is the origin of everything, the arts, great events, manners, customs, wars, the overthrow of empires.

In the Bible you find Delilah, Judith; in fiction, Omphale, Helen; in history, the Sabines, Cleopatra, and many others.

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And so we reign all-powerful sovereigns. But we, like the kings, must use delicate diplomacy.

Love, my dear little one, is made up of finesse, and of imperceptible sensations.

We know that it closely resembles death; but it is also as frail as glass. The slightest jar breaks it, and then our sway is ended, and we are never able to regain it.

We have the faculty of making people adore us, but we lack one little thing, the discernment of distinctions in caresses, the subtle perception of TOO MUCH when showing our devotion. During the hours of embracing we lose the feeling of the fitness of things while the man we dominate remains master of himself, and is able to see the absurdity of certain words, the lack of propriety in certain actions.

Guard well against that, my darling; it is the defect in our armor, it is our heel of Achilles.

Do you know whence comes our true power? From the kiss, the kiss alone! When we give our lips we can become queens.

The kiss is merely a preface, however; but a charming preface more delicate than the deed itself, a preface that one reads over and over without stopping, while one cannot always re-read the book. Yes, the meeting of mouths is the most perfect, the most divine sensation given to mortals, the last, the supreme limit of happiness.

It is in the kiss, in the kiss alone that one believes now and then that he feels the impossible union of souls which we strive after, the fusion of feeble hearts.

Do you recollect these lines of Sully-Prudhomme's:

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Caresses are merely restless transports,
The vain efforts of poor Love to attempt
The impossible union of souls through the body.

Even one caress occasions this deep sensation, the spiritual in two beings mingling into one, such is the kiss. There is nothing equal to this trembling approach of mouths, this first contact damp and cool. The wild passion of entire possession is not worth this trembling approach of mouths, this first contact damp and cool, followed by this motionless connection bewildering and long, so long from one to the other.

And so, my beautiful one, the kiss is our strongest weapon but we must be careful not to take the edge off. Do not forget that its value is relative, purely a condition. It is constantly changing according to circumstances, the inclination of the moment, the state of expectation and the ecstasy of the spirit. I shall cite an example.

Another poet, François Coppée, wrote a verse which we all know by heart, a verse which we adore, which thrills us to our heart.

After having described the lover waiting in a closed room one Winter evening — his restlessness, his nervous impatience, his terrible fear that SHE WOULD NOT COME, he describes the arrival of the lady-love who enters at last, in great haste, breathless, bringing in the cold in her skirts, and he cries:

"Oh! the first kisses through the face veil!"

Is not that a verse of exquisite sentiment, of delicate and charming discernment, and perfectly true. All those who have gone to a clandestine rendezvous, who have passionately thrown themselves into the arms of

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men, know well those delicious first kisses through the face veil, and even now shiver while remembering them. Nevertheless, their charm is entirely due to circumstances, the delay, the anxious expectancy, but truly viewed as purely, or if you prefer, impurely sensual, they are detestable.

Reflect. It was cold outside. The young woman had walked briskly, her face veil was very damp from her cool breath. Drops of water sparkled in the mesh of the black lace. The lover rushed towards her and glued his ardent lips to this condensed vapor from her lungs, the dye, with its mean odor of chemicals, penetrated the mouth of the young man, and dampened his mustache. He did not taste the lips of his beloved, he had only tasted the dye of this lace saturated with cool breath.

And notwithstanding this we all write with the poet:

"Oh! the first kiss through the face veil!"

As this caress is entirely conventional, care must be taken not to cheapen it.

Well, my dearest, on several occasions I have seen you display great lack of tact. However, you are not to blame for this; most women lose their power simply by kissing too often, by kissing at inappropriate times. When they find their husband, or their lover somewhat weary, during those moments of relaxing, when the heart, like the body, needs repose, instead of comprehending how he is feeling, they are bent on giving inopportune caresses, wearying him by persisting in holding up their lips, and fatiguing him by hugging him without rhyme or reason.

Trust to my experience. In the first place never embrace your husband in public, in the train, or in the res-

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taurant. This is the worst possible taste; repress your inclination in this regard. It would make him feel ridiculous and he might not always forgive you.

Above all, place no faith in needless kisses lavishly exchanged between intimate friends. You give these, I am sure, a dreadful waste of affection.

Well, one day I saw you act most improperly. Doubtless you have forgotten all about it.

We were all three in your little parlor, and, as you made no company of me, your husband held you on his lap and for some time embraced the nape of your neck, his mouth buried in the curled hair on your neck. All at once you cried out: "Ah! the fire!" You had not attended to it properly and it was going out. The few dark expiring logs scarcely reddened the hearth. Then your husband arose, started for the wood box, and seized two enormous logs, which he had great trouble in carrying; at that moment you went towards him with begging lips, murmuring: "Embrace me." He turned his head with difficulty, as he had trouble in holding the logs. Then you slowly and gently placed your mouth to that of the unhappy man, who stood there with his collar awry, his back bent, his arms all but broken, trembling with fatigue and the desperate effort he was making. And you prolonged this agonizing kiss without seeing or understanding the situation. Then as soon as you released him you began to murmur as though offended: "How badly you embrace me!" Well, my dearest!

Oh! guard against this. We all have this foolish desire, and unconsciously feel this stupid impulse of becoming demonstrative at the most inopportune moments; for instance, when he is carrying a glass of water,

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when he is putting on his boots, when he is taking off his cravat, and even when he is in some painful position, and we try to hold him still by giving him an inconvenient caress which forces him to stop a moment in the midst of what he is doing, and his only wish is to be rid of us.

On no account think this criticism insignificant and illogical. Love is fastidious, my little one: a mere nothing wounds it; remember that everything depends on the tact we display in our caresses. A kiss given at the wrong moment can do a great deal of harm.

Test my advice.

Your old aunt,

COLLETTE.

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THE TOMB

ON the seventeenth of July, eighteen hundred and eighty-three, at two o'clock in the morning, the caretaker of Béziers cemetery, who lived in a little pavilion at the end of the burying ground, was awakened by the yelping of his dog, which was locked in the kitchen.

He immediately went downstairs, and saw that the animal was scenting something under the door and barking furiously, as though a vagabond were prowling about the house. Vincent, the caretaker, took up his gun and went out cautiously.

His dog started off, ran in the direction of General Bonnet's lane and stopped directly in front of Madam Tomoiseau's monument.

The caretaker, who was now advancing cautiously, soon noticed a dim light in the direction of Malenvers lane. He wound his way between the graves and witnessed a most horrible deed of desecration.

A young man had disinterred the corpse of a young woman, buried the evening before, and he was taking it away from the tomb.

A small dark lantern, placed on a pile of earth, illuminated this hideous scene.

Vincent, the caretaker, pounced upon this miserable man, felled him to the ground, tied his hands and took him to the police station.

He was a young city lawyer, rich and well thought of. His name was Courbataille.

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He was tried. The public prosecutor remembered the monstrous deeds committed by sergeant Bertrand, and so he aroused the audience.

The crowd was thrilled with indignation. As soon as the magistrate sat down the cry arose: "Put him to death! Put him to death!" The president had difficulty in re-establishing silence.

Then he said, in a serious tone of voice:

"Proceed, what have you to say in your defense?"

Courbataille, who had refused counsel, arose. He was a handsome youth, large, dark, of open countenance, strong features, and a fearless eye.

The crowd began to hiss.

He was not disconcerted, but commenced speaking with a slightly husky voice, a little low in the beginning, but gradually gaining in strength:

"Mr. President,

"Jurymen,

"I have very little to say. The woman whose tomb I violated was my mistress. I loved her.

"I loved her, not sensually, not simply from kindness of soul and heart, but with a boundless, perfect love, distractedly.

"Listen to what I am about to say:

"When I first met her, I felt a strange sensation on seeing her. It was not astonishment, nor admiration for I was not what is called thunderstruck, but it was a delightful sensation, as though I had been plunged in a tepid bath. Her movements captivated me, her voice enchanted me, everything about her gave me infinite pleasure. It also seemed to me that I had known her for a long time, that I had seen her before. She seemed to have some of my spirit within her.

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"She seemed to me like an answer to an appeal from my soul to this vague and continuous appeal which forces us toward Hope throughout our lives.

"When I got a little better acquainted with her, the mere thought of seeing her again threw me into a very agitated and troublous state of mind; the touch of her hand as it rested in mine was such a joy to me that I never could have imagined the like before; her smile made my eyes shine with joy, and made me feel like running about, dancing, rolling on the ground.

"Then she became my mistress.

"She was more than that to me, she was my life itself. I hoped for nothing more on earth, I wished for nothing more, I longed for nothing more.

"Well, one evening, as we were taking a rather long walk by the bank of the stream, we were overtaken by the rain. She felt cold.

"The next day she had inflammation of the lungs. Eight hours later she died.

"In these hours of agony I was so astonished and frightened that I could not grasp the situation nor reflect.

"When she was dead, I was so stunned by despair that I was unable to think. I wept.

"During all the horrible phases of interment my sharp and excessive grief was the sorrow of a man beside himself, a sort of sensual physical grief.

"Then when she was gone, when she was buried, my mind suddenly became clear, and I passed through a train of mental suffering so terrible that even the love she had given me was dear at such a price.

"Then the thought fastened itself upon me:

"I shall never see her again.

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"After reflecting on that for a whole day, it maddens you.

"Think of it! A being is there, one whom you adore, a unique being, for in the whole wide world there is no one who resembles it. This being has given itself to you, with you it creates this mysterious union called love. Its eye seems to you vaster than space, more charming than the world, its bright eye full of tender smiles. This being loves you. When it speaks to you its voice overwhelms you with happiness.

"And suddenly this being disappears! Think of it! It disappears not only from your sight, but from everybody's. It is dead. Do you understand what that word means? Never any more, never any more, nowhere, this being is no longer in existence. This eye will never see again. Never will this voice, never will any voice like this, among human voices, pronounce one word in the same way that she pronounced it.

"There will never be another face born like hers. Never, never! The cast of statues is kept; the stamp that reproduces objects with the same outlines and the same colors is preserved. But this body and this face, they will never be seen again on this earth. And still there will be born thousands of beings, millions, thousands of millions, and even more, and among all these women there will never be found one like her. Can that be possible? It makes one mad to think of it!

"She had lived twenty years, no more, and she has disappeared forever, forever, forever! She thought, she smiled, she loved me. That is all. The flies which die in the fall are of as much importance as we in creation. No more! And I thought how her body, her body fresh, warm, and so sweet, so white, so beautiful

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was about to rot in the depths of a box under the ground. And her soul, her thoughts, her love, where are they?

"Never to see her again! Never to see her again! The thought of this decomposed body haunted me, which still I might be able to recognize. And I wanted to see it again!

"I started out with a spade, a lantern, and a hammer. I jumped over the cemetery wall. I found the hole dug for her grave. It had not been entirely filled in.

"I uncovered the coffin. And I lifted a plank. A dreadful odor, the filthy breath of putrefaction was wafted in my face. Oh! her bed, perfumed with orris root!

"However, I opened the coffin, and I thrust in it my lighted lantern, and I saw her. Her face was blue, bloated, frightful! A black liquid had run out of her mouth.

"She! it was she! I was seized with horror. But I extended my arms and I took hold of her hair so as to draw this hideous thing toward me!

"At that moment I was arrested.

"All night long I kept with me — as one keeps the perfume of a woman after an embrace — the foul odor of this decay, the odor of my beloved!

"Do with me what you like."

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M. JOCASTE

MADAM, do you recollect our great quarrel one evening in the little parlor, about the father who committed incest? Do you recollect how indignant you were, the violent words you flung at me, and how angry you became, and do you also remember all I said in defense of that man? You blamed me. I recall that.

No one in the world, you declared, no one could uphold the infamous deed which I defended. To-day I have just told this tale in public.

Perhaps some one might be found who, although not excusing the brutal deed, would understand that one cannot struggle against certain fatalities that seem to be horrible fantasies of all-powerful nature.

When sixteen years old she had been married to a hard-hearted old man, a business man who married her for her money. She was a darling blonde creature, gay and dreamy at the same time, and yearning for an ideal happiness. Disillusion fell on her heart and broke it. Suddenly she understood life,— no future, the destruction of her hopes, and one wish alone took possession of her soul, and that was to have a child to claim her love.

But she did not have one. Two years passed. She fell in love with a young man twenty-three years old, who was wildly in love with her. For some time she firmly resisted his advances. He was called Peter Martel.

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But one Winter's evening they two were alone, at her house. He had come to drink a cup of tea. Then they sat down near the fire, on a low seat. They scarcely spoke. They were passionately in love with each other, their lips thirsted wildly for other lips, their arms trembled with a desire to open and embrace some one.

The lamp, draped with lace, shed a cozy light in the silent parlor.

Although they were both embarrassed they occasionally exchanged a few words, but when their eyes met their hearts trembled.

How can acquired sentiments withstand the violence of instinct? How can the appearance of reserve withstand the irresistible desires of nature?

It happened that their fingers touched. And that was enough. They were overcome by passion. They embraced, and she yielded.

She became pregnant. By her husband, or by her lover. How did she know? Doubtless by her lover.

Then she became very much frightened and felt sure that she would die in her confinement, and she insisted on the man who was the cause of her being in this condition to swear over and over again to watch over the child during its whole life, to refuse it nothing, to be everything to it, yes everything, and, if necessary, even to commit a crime in order to insure its happiness.

She carried this to an absurd extent. She became more and more worked up as her confinement drew near.

She died giving birth to a girl.

The young man was in the depths of despair, in fact his despair was so great that he could not hide it; perhaps the husband suspected something; perhaps he knew that he could not have been the father of the girl! He

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forbade the house to the man who thought himself the real father, hid the child from him, and had it brought up in seclusion.

Many years passed.

Peter Martel forgot all about it, as one forgets everything. He became rich, but he could not love anyone now, and he had not married. His life was ordinary; that of a happy, quiet man. He had never heard a word about the husband he had deceived, nor about the young girl he thought was his.

Well, one morning he received a letter from a comparative stranger, who happened to mention the death of his old rival, and he was somewhat disturbed, and filled with remorse. What had become of this child, his child? Could he do nothing for her? He inquired about her. She had been brought up by an aunt, and she was poor, miserably poor.

He wanted to see her and to help her. He called on the only relation of the orphan.

Even his name awoke no memory. He was forty years old and still looked like a young man. He was received, but he did not dare to say that he had known her mother, fearing it would give rise to suspicion later on.

Well, as soon as she entered the little parlor where he anxiously awaited her coming, he trembled for he was all but overcome with surprise. It was she, the other woman! the woman who was dead!

She was the same age, had the same eyes, the same hair, the same figure, the same smile, the same voice. The illusion was so real that it maddened him; all the tumultuous love of days gone by sprang up from the depths of his heart. She likewise was both gay and un-

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affected. At once they became friends and shook hands.

On returning home he found that the old wound had been opened again, and he wept desperately; he held his head in his hands and wept for the woman who had died, haunted by memories and by the familiar words she used to say; he was plunged in despair from which there was no escape.

He visited the house in which the young girl resided. He could no longer live without her, without her merry talk, the rustle of her gown, the intonation of her voice. And now in his thoughts and in his heart he confounded the two women, the one gone before and the living one, forgetting distance, the time that had elapsed, and death; always loving that one in this one, and this one in memory of the other one, not trying to understand why, to know why, never even asking himself if she could be his daughter.

Occasionally, when he noticed the discomfort in which lived the woman he adored with this double passion, which he, himself, could not understand, he felt terribly about it.

What could he do? Could he offer money? How could he do it? What right had he? Could he play the role of tutor? He seemed scarcely older than she, everyone would take him for her lover. Should he marry her? This thought suddenly surged up in his soul and frightened him. Then he became calmer. Who would ask her hand in marriage? She had nothing, not a cent.

Her aunt noticed how often he came; and saw quite plainly that he was in love with this child. And what was he waiting for? Did he know?

One evening they were alone. They were talk-

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softly side by side on the sofa in the little parlor. Suddenly he took her hand in a paternal manner. He held it, and his heart and senses were awakened against his will, he did not dare to reject the hand which she had given him, and yet he felt himself growing weaker as he held it. Suddenly she threw herself in his arms. For she loved ardently as her mother had done, just as though she had inherited this fatal passion.

Completely beside himself he put his lips to her blonde hair and, as she raised her head to escape, their mouths met.

People become silly at times. They were so now.

When he reached the street he walked straight ahead, not knowing what he would do.

I recollect, madam, your indignant exclamation: "He had no choice but to commit suicide!"

I answered you: "And as for her? Should he have killed her also?"

This child loved him to distraction, foolishly, with the fatal and hereditary passion which had thrown her, a virgin, ignorant and distracted, on the breast of this man. She had acted in this manner owing to the irresistible intoxication of her entire being, which made her lose control of herself, which made her give herself, carried away by tumultuous instinct, and throw herself into the arms of her lover.

If he were to kill himself what would become of her? . . . She would die! . . . She would die dishonored, in despair, suffering terrible tortures.

What should he do?

Leave her, give her a marriage portion, marry her to someone else? . . . In that case she would die; she would die from grief, without accepting his money

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or another husband, for she had given herself to him. He had ruined her life, destroyed every possibility of happiness for her; he had condemned her to everlasting misery, to everlasting despair, to everlasting fire, to everlasting solitude, or to death.

Besides he loved her himself also! He revolted at the thought that he loved her extravagantly. She was his own daughter, be it so. The hazard of impregnation, a contact of a second had made — of that being allied to him by no legal bond — his daughter, whom he cherished as he had her mother, and even more, as though he were possessed of two passions.

Besides was she really his daughter? What did that matter anyhow? Who would know it?

Ardent memories brought back the vow made to the dying woman. "He had promised to give his entire life to the child, to commit a crime if necessary to insure her happiness."

And he loved her so that he plunged headlong into this abominable and pleasing crime, tortured by pain, and ravaged by desire.

Who will know about it? the other man, the father, being dead!

"So be it!" said he; "this secret sin may break my heart. As she does not suspect it, I alone will carry its weight."

He asked for her hand, and he married her.

I don't know if they were happy, but I should have done as he did, madam.

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THE MASK

THERE was a fancy-dress ball that night, at the Elysée-Montmartre. It was Mi-Carême and the crowd poured into the lighted hall like water into a flood-gate. The blare of the orchestra, that sounded like a thunderstorm of harmony, shook the ceiling and the walls of the building and could be heard blocks away, giving rise in the streets and in the houses, to that irrepressible desire to have a good time which sleeps in every human being.

And the "habitués" of the place streamed in from the four corners of Paris, people of every description, who liked coarse and noisy fun with an odor of vulgarity and debauchery about it. There were clerks, rowdies and courtesans, courtesans of all classes, from the poorest to the richest, old ones covered with diamonds and young ones, crazy to have a good time, to captivate the men, to spend a lot of money. Men in evening clothes sidled through the crowd in search of youthful victims, all their senses bent on discovering some savory morsel, while the masked people seemed more especially bent on amusement. The famous "quadrilles" had already attracted a great crowd. The swaying hedge of men and women that surrounded the dancers closely followed their movements, sometimes edging quite near and sometimes falling away to give room to their evolutions. The two female performers, whose legs seemed to be attached to their bodies by rubber bands, made the most surprising contortions. They would kick so

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The quadrille.

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vigorously that their legs would seem to fly heavenward, detached from their bodies; then, spreading them wide and sliding one forward and one backward, they would rapidly touch the floor in a split that was funny and disgusting at the same time.

Their partners, meanwhile, executed all kinds of fancy steps, bounding hither and thither like rubber balls, twirling around on their toes, waving their arms and shaking their whole bodies in an ecstasy of motion.

One of these men, who had joined the most celebrated "quadrille" to act as substitute for an absent dancer, the handsome "Songe-au-Gosse," and who was endeavoring to hold his own with the untiring "Arête-de-Veau" executed "pas seuls" which aroused wild delight and unbounded mirth in the onlookers.

He was very thin and was dressed like a dude and wore a painted mask with a curly blond mustache over his face. A wavy blond wig surmounted the mask.

He looked like a wax figure from the musée Grévin, like a strange, weird caricature of a fashion-plate and although he was awkward, he danced with comical conviction and the utmost gusto. He seemed heavy and stiff compared to the other man, just as a spaniel that is frolicking with a greyhound.

A salvo of mock applause would greet each of his efforts. And, intoxicated with his success, the man danced with such a fury that he suddenly pitched forward into the crowd of bystanders. They recoiled to let him pass, but quickly gathered together again around the inanimate form of the dancer, as he lay prone upon the floor.

Some men picked him up and carried him out, shouting for a doctor. A young man in fashionable clothes

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came forward and offered his services, saying unassumingly:

"I am a professor of the Faculty."

The crowd made way for him and he followed the men who had carried the dancer into a little room that looked like an office; they laid the unconscious man on chairs. When the doctor proceeded to remove the mask, he discovered that it was attached with a number of fine wires that secured it to the edges of the wig and that enclosed the whole head in a solid framework. Even the man's neck was imprisoned in a false skin that continued the chin, and this skin, colored to simulate living flesh, was fastened to the shirt-collar.

All this had to be cut with heavy shears and after the physician had made a slit that reached from the temple to the shoulder, he parted this shell and found in it the face of an old, withered man. It was such a surprise to the men who had brought in the young, curly-headed boy, that nobody laughed or said a word.

They all looked wonderingly from the sad, white face that lay motionless on the chairs, covered with straggling white hairs, some of which were long and fell over the forehead, while others were short and covered the chin and cheeks, to the pretty painted mask with its fixed smile, that lay nearby.

After remaining unconscious a long time, the old man finally came to, but he seemed so weak and ill, that the doctor feared that some complications might arise.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

The old dancer thought a while, then remembered, and gave the name of a street that nobody knew. So they had to ask him further details concerning the locality in which he lived. He furnished the information re-

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quired with such visible effort, and so much hesitation and indecision, that it openly revealed the chaos of his mind.

The doctor continued:

"I shall see you home myself."

He was curious to find out who this strange manikin could be, and where this jumping phenomenon resided.

Soon afterwards a "fiacre" was hurrying both of them toward the "buttes Montmartre."

They stopped in front of a poor-looking house, erected on an empty lot and ascended a filthy staircase, that led to the abode of the miserable tenants who fill such houses as these.

The doctor, steadying himself with one hand on the shaky railing, with the other helped the old man to the fourth floor.

They knocked at a door and a neat-looking old woman appeared. Her hair was covered with a clean white night-cap, and she had one of those coarse-featured, but kindly faces, that are often seen on working-men's wives.

"Mon Dieu," she cried, "what has happened to him?"

After matters had been explained to her, she quieted down and also quieted the doctor by telling him that the same thing had often occurred before.

"We must get him to bed, monsieur, nothing else will do; he will sleep and to-morrow he'll be all right again."

"But," said the doctor, "he can hardly speak!"

"Oh! it's nothing, just a little too much drink, that's all. He ate no dinner in order to be spry and then he

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took two "absinthes" to get up steam. Absinthe, you see, makes him able to dance, but it just wipes out his ideas. He's too old to go on as he does. No, really, sometimes I think he'll never be sensible!"

The doctor, in surprise, insisted:

"But why, a man of his years, does he go on like that?"

She shrugged her shoulders and the anger which was slowly overwhelming her, sent the blood to her face.

"Yes, why! Why, so's people will think he's young, of course! So's the women'll think he's a boy and talk rot to him, so's he can rub up against 'em, rub against their dirty hides with all their perfumes and powders and pomades . . . Oh! he's a fine one, he is! Believe me, monsieur, I've led a nice life, since forty years. . . . But I must first get him into bed, so's he won't take cold. D'ye mind lending me a hand? When he's taken this way, it's all I can do to manage him alone."

During all this, the old man was sitting on the bed in a drunken stupor, with his long white hair falling over his eyes.

His companion looked at him in a furious yet tender manner and then continued:

"Don't you think he has a fine face for his age, monsieur? And to think that he disguises himself to look like a boy! The pity of it! Really he's got a fine head, hasn't he, monsieur? Just wait, I want you to see it, before I get him to bed."

She went to the wash-stand and picked up a hair-brush. Then she walked over to the bed and taking the tangled white locks of the old drunkard in one hand,

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she managed, with a few strokes of the brush, to transform him into an artist's model, with soft curls falling about his neck. She stepped back to get a better view of her work:

"Isn't he fine for his age, monsieur?" she demanded again.

"Yes, indeed," assented the doctor, who was beginning to get a lot of fun out of the adventure.

She added:

"And if you could only have known him when he was twenty-five! But we must get him to bed, 'cause if we don't, the absinthe will turn on his stomach. Here, monsieur, will you take hold of his sleeve? — higher — that's it — now his pants — wait, I'll pull off his boots — there.

"Now just hold him, while I open the bed — there you are — lay him down — if you think he'll move to make room for me afterwards, you're finely mistaken. I have to lie anywhere, I do. He doesn't care. Ah! the old rapscallion!"

As soon as he felt the cool sheets, the old fellow opened his eyes; then he shut them again and over his whole face spread a determined resolve to go to sleep.

The doctor, who was gazing at him with ever growing interest, inquired:

"So he plays the young buck at fancy-dress balls?"

"Yes, monsieur, at all of 'em, and he comes back home in the morning in the most dreadful state you can imagine. You see, it's regret that makes him go, and that makes him tie a painted mask over his own face. Yes, the regret that he ain't anymore what he used to be and that he can't have the fun he used to have!"

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He had fallen asleep by this time and was beginning to snore. She looked at him with tender compassion and then resumed:

"Ah! What successes that man had, monsieur! More'n you'd think, more'n any society gentleman or generals or singers."

"Really? Why, what did he do?"

"Oh! It'll surprise you at first, seeing that you didn't know him in his day. When I first met him, it was at a ball, for he used to go to them all the time. As soon as I saw him, I was caught, caught like a fish with a bait. He was handsome, monsieur, handsome enough to make a woman cry, as dark as a raven, with wavy hair and eyes as big as windows. Ah! he was a fine-looking man! He took me home that night and I've never left him since, no, never, not a day, in spite of everything. Oh! he has led me a terrible life!"

The doctor asked:

"Are you married?"

She replied with simplicity:

"Yes, monsieur . . . , if we hadn't been he'd 'a left me too, like all the rest. I've been his wife and his servant, anything he wanted me to be . . . and how he's made me cry . . . and tears I never showed him, either!

"'Cause he used to tell his experiences to me, to me, . . . to me . . . monsieur . . . without knowing that he was killing me . . . "

"But" inquired the physician, "what was his profession?"

"Oh! that's true . . . . I forgot to tell you. He was the head man at Martel's, monsieur, but such a man they had never had before . . . an artist

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who could earn on the average of ten francs an hour . . . "

"Martel? . . . . Who was that?"

"The hairdresser, monsieur, the celebrated hairdresser of the Opéra, who had all the famous actresses as customers. Yes, all the very finest actresses used to have their hair done by Ambroise and they gave him tips that amounted to a fortune. Ah! monsieur, all women are alike! When a man pleases their fancy, why, they just take him. It's so easy . . . and it's so dreadful to hear about. . . . For he used to tell me everything. . . . He just couldn't keep still. . . . No, he just couldn't! Those things give a man such pleasure! I guess they get more pleasure out of the telling than out of the thing itself, monsieur!

"When he used to come home at night, haggard and with shining eyes, I would say to myself; 'Another one. I bet he's had another one.' Then I was crazy to question him and crazy to keep him from telling me and we would just look at each other and not say a word.

"I knew very well that he wouldn't keep still and that he'd surely blurt it all out. I felt it by his manner and his laugh, that seemed to say: 'I had some fun again, to-day, Madeleine.' I pretended not to notice it and would set the table and bring in the dinner.

"At those times, monsieur, it seemed to me as if my love for him was being crushed within me as with a stone. It hurt, I can tell you that. But he didn't seem to take any notice of it, didn't know my suffering; he had to tell someone, to boast, to show how much the women cared for him . . . and he only had me to tell it to. . . .

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"So, of course, I had to listen to him and take it all in like poison.

"He used to begin his dinner and then he'd say:

"'Another one, Madeleine.'

"And I'd think: 'There it is! Mon Dieu, what a man! Why did I ever meet him?'

"Then he'd go on: 'Another one and a swell one, this time.' And it was either a little actress of the *Vaudeville* or of the *Variétés* or else a well-known one, one with a celebrated name. He told me their names and described their homes and everything, yes, everything, monsieur. . . . Things that tore my very heart to pieces. And then he'd go over the whole thing again and seem so happy that I pretended I was enjoying it, too, so's he wouldn't be vexed with me.

"Perhaps it really wasn't true! He loved to boast so, that he was capable of inventing these stories! But, after all, it may have been true! Those nights he'd pretend he was tired and would go to bed right after supper! We had supper at eleven, for he never got home earlier than that, on account of his work.

"After he had finished telling his experience, he would walk up and down the room smoking cigarettes and he would look so handsome with his wavy hair and mustache, that I'd say to myself: 'It must be true, after all. If I'm so crazy about that man, why shouldn't other women be?' Ah! how many times I've felt like screaming and crying and throwing myself out of the window, while I carried out the dishes after dinner! Then he'd yawn, to let me see how tired he was, and before going to bed he'd say two or three times: 'Dieu, how well I'll sleep to-night!'

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"I'm not angry with him, for he didn't know how much it hurt me. No, he couldn't know! He liked to boast of his conquests just as a peacock likes to show off his tail! He ended by thinking that every woman was after him.

"It was terribly hard for him to grow old.

"Oh! monsieur, when I discovered his first white hair, I almost collapsed, I was so startled . . . and I felt happy . . . horridly happy!!! I thought: 'It's the end . . . it's the end.' I felt as if I were coming out of prison. Now I could have him all to myself, the others wouldn't want him."

"It was one morning, in bed. He was asleep and I leaned over to kiss him and I saw among his curls a little, silvery hair. What a surprise! I wouldn't have thought it possible! My first thought was to pull it out, so's he wouldn't see it! But, when I looked again, I found another one. White hair! He was getting white! My heart throbbed and my skin became moist; still, in my heart, I was glad!

"It was horrid of me, but I went about my work singing and didn't wake him. At last, when he opened his eyes, I said:

"'Do you know what I found while you were asleep?'

"'No.'

"'I found some white hairs in your head.'

"He started with annoyance and sat bolt upright in bed. Then he said crossly:

"'It isn't true!'

"'Yes, it is, on the right temple. I counted four.'

"He jumped out of bed and ran to the looking-glass.

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"He could not find them. So then I showed him the shortest one and said:

"'Well, it's not surprising, with the life you lead! In a year or two, you'll be done for!'

"Well, monsieur, I was right, for two years afterwards you would not have thought he was the same man! He was still fine-looking, but he was fading rapidly and the women didn't care for him! Ah! I led a hard life then. I went through everything! Nothing suited him, nothing pleased him. He gave up his profession to go into the hat business and lost money. Then he tried to go on the stage and failed and then he took to going to balls. Well, he had sense enough to hold on to a little of his money and we live off that now. It's just enough, but it ain't much! To think that he almost had a fortune at one time!

"Now, you see how it is with him. He carries on as if he was possessed. He has to be young, he has to dance with women that smell of powder and scent. Poor old dear!"

With tears in her eyes, she gazed at her sleeping mate. Then, tiptoeing to the bed, she put a light kiss on his hair. The doctor had risen to go, for he hardly knew what to say to this strange old couple.

As he was on the threshold she said:

"You might leave your address, monsieur. If he should get worse, I could send for you."

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THE PATRON

HE had never dared dream of such a high position in life! Like a good many others, Jean Marin, the son of a provincial Sheriff, had come to Paris to take up law. In the various "brasseries" which he had successively patronized, he had made friends with several students who discussed politics, the while they swallowed numerous "bocks."

He developed great admiration for them and became their follower, even paying for their drinks when he happened to have any money.

Afterwards, he practiced law and handled some suits, which he lost.

One morning, he read in the papers that a friend of his had become a deputy.

Jean Marin looked him up and became his faithful servant, the friend who does all the burdensome things that are to be done and whom the man in power can treat as he likes.

But it so happened that the deputy became a Minister of State and six months afterwards, Jean Marin was appointed State Councillor.

At first, he was so puffed up with pride, that he almost lost his head. He would take walks just to show himself off, as if the people he met in the street could guess his position just by looking at him. He always managed to say to the various tradespeople he dealt with, as well as to the newsdealers and even the coachmen:

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"I, who am a State Councillor . . . ".

He naturally experienced, as the direct result of his profession and his newly acquired dignity, an imperative desire to patronize. He would offer his influence to everyone he met, at all times, and with never-ceasing generosity.

When he ran up against a man he knew on the boulevard, he would rush up to him in a delighted manner, shake hands, inquire after his health and then, without waiting for any inquiry, would blurt out:

"You know I am State Councillor, and I am absolutely at your service. If there is anything I can do for you, I hope you will call on me unhesitatingly. In my position, a man can do a lot for his friends."

Then he would go into some café with this friend and ask for some writing-paper and a pen and ink — "just one sheet, waiter, I want to write a letter of introduction."

He wrote quantities of these letters, sometimes twenty, thirty, and fifty a day. He wrote them at the Café Américain, at Bignon's, at Tortoni's, at the Maison-Dorée, at the Café Riche, at the Helder, at the Café Anglais, at Napolitain's, everywhere, in fact.

He addressed them to every office-holder in the Republic, from the Ministers of State down to the mere City Judges. And he was happy, thoroughly happy.

One morning, as he was leaving his rooms to go to the State Council, it began to rain: He wondered whether he ought to take a "fiacre" but finally he decided that he would walk.

The shower proved to be a heavy one, and it fairly drowned the sidewalks and thoroughfares. M. Marin

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was compelled to seek shelter in a doorway. An old priest had already taken refuge there, an old, white-haired priest. Before he had been appointed State Councillor, M. Marin did not care much for the clergy. But now, ever since a Cardinal had consulted him regarding some delicate matter, he treated the clergy with consideration. The downpour was so heavy that the two men were forced to seek the janitor's "loge," to avoid getting soaked. M. Marin, who was constantly impelled to prate about himself, declared:

"A very bad day, monsieur l'abbé."

The old priest bowed:

"Ah! yes, monsieur, and it is all the more disagreeable when one is in Paris for a few days only."

"Ah! so you live in the provinces?"

"Yes, monsieur, I am only passing through Paris."

"Indeed, it is most annoying to have rain when one is spending a day or so in the capital. We officials, who live here all the year round, do not mind it."

The abbé made no reply and looked into the street, where the rain was beginning to stop a little. And suddenly clutching his gown in both hands, he resolved to brave the elements.

M. Marin, seeing him depart, shouted:

"You will get drenched, monsieur l'abbé. Wait a few minutes more, the rain will stop."

The old man wavered and then said:

"Well, I'm in a great hurry. I have a very urgent engagement."

M. Marin appeared very much concerned.

"But you will certainly be wet through. May I ask where you are going?"

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The priest seemed to hesitate a moment, but then he said:

"I am going near the Palais-Royal."

"Well then, if you will allow me, monsieur l'abbé, I will offer you the shelter of my umbrella. I am going to the State Council. I am a State Councillor."

The old priest raised his eyes, looked at the speaker and exclaimed:

"I am greatly obliged to you, monsieur, and accept your offer with pleasure."

Then M. Marin linked arms with the old man and they both sauntered forth. The State Councillor was most solicitous and directed and advised his companion with touching thoughtfulness.

"Be careful, here, monsieur l'abbé, this gutter is frightful. Be careful of the carriages, they throw mud all over one. There, take care of the umbrellas! Nothing is more of a menace to the eyes than the sharp ends of an umbrella! The women, especially, are so careless; they never mind anything and thrust their sunshades and their umbrellas right under people's noses. And they never go out of anyone's way, either. They seem to think that they own the whole city. I think myself, that their education has been sadly neglected."

And M. Marin chuckled gleefully.

The priest made no reply. He picked his way carefully along the streets, slightly bent, choosing with discrimination the dry spots on the pavement so as not to bespatter his shoes and gown.

M. Marin went on:

"I suppose you are in Paris for a little rest?"

The old man retorted:

"No, I have come on business."

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"Oh! anything important? Might I inquire what it is? If I can be of service to you, I would only be too glad."

The abbé looked embarrassed. He mumbled:

"Oh! it's a little personal matter. A little difficulty with — with my bishop. It could hardly interest you. It is something about the adjustment — the adjustment of some ecclesiastical matter."

M. Marin became eager.

"Why, these matters are always referred to the State Council. I wish you would make use of me, at all events."

"Yes, monsieur, the State Council is just where I am going to. You are most kind. I have an appointment with M. Lerepère and M. Savon and maybe I will interview M. Petitpas also."

M. Marin stopped right in the middle of the sidewalk.

"Why, they are my friends, monsieur l'abbé, my dearest friends, fine fellows, all of them. I shall warmly recommend you to them. Rely on me."

The priest thanked him and protested his undying gratitude.

M. Marin was delighted.

"Oh! you can thank your stars, monsieur l'abbé, that you met me. You will see how smoothly everything will go now."

They finally reached the State Council. M. Marin conducted the priest to his office, installed him before the open fire and then sat down at his desk and wrote:

"My dear colleague, allow me to recommend most heartily to you a very worthy priest, M. l'abbé . . ."

He paused and inquired:

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"Your name, please?"

"Abbé Ceinture."

M. Marin wrote:

"M. l'abbé Ceinture, who needs your intercession in a little matter which he will lay before you.

"I am glad of this opportunity which allows me, my dear colleague, . . . "

And he concluded with the customary compliments.

After he had written the three letters, he handed them to his protégé who departed amid renewed protestations of gratitude.

M. Marin attended to his official duties, went home, spent a quiet day and slept peacefully that night. The next morning he woke up happy, dressed and sat down to read the papers.

The first one he opened was a radical organ. He read:

"Our Clergy and our Officials.

"Really, there seems to be no end to the misdeeds of the clergy. A certain priest named Ceinture, convicted of having conspired against the existing government, accused of infamous acts, that we will not even mention, suspected besides of being a former Jesuit transformed into a mere priest, revoked by his bishop for motives which are said to be unprintable, and summoned to Paris to explain his conduct, has found a warm partisan in the person of Jean Marin, State Councillor, who did not hesitate to give this priestly rascal the most enthusiastic letters of recommendation to all his Republican colleagues.

"We wish to call the Minister's attention to the unqualifiable attitude of this State Councillor . . . ."

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M. Marin sprang to his feet, slammed down the paper and rushed off to see his colleague Petitpas.

"Well," exclaimed the latter, as M. Marin hove in sight, "you must have gone crazy to recommend that old conspirator to me."

Thoroughly bewildered, M. Marin retorted:

"No . . . no . . . you see, I was deceived myself. He looked like such a good man . . . he tricked me . . . he tricked me most shamefully. I beg of you to condemn him severely, most severely. I shall go myself to the State Attorney and the Archbishop of Paris, yes, to the Archbishop. . . ."

And he sat down abruptly at M. Petitpas' desk and wrote:

"Monseigneur, I have the honor of bringing to your Worship's attention, that I have been victimized by the intrigues and lies of a certain abbé Ceinture, who shamefully took advantage of my good faith.

"Misled by the protestations of this unworthy priest, I was induced . . ."

Then, after he had signed his name to the letter and sealed it, he turned to his colleague and remarked:

"Look here, my dear friend, I hope this will be a lesson to you never to recommend anyone."

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NOT a breath of air stirred the heavy mist that hung over the river. It looked like a cloud of drab cotton poised on the water. The banks remained shrouded in a thick fog that had assumed all kinds of fantastic shapes, but daybreak was near, for the hill in the distance was beginning to be discernible. At its foot, in the pale rays of the slowly rising sun, the large white patches formed by the white-washed houses showed one after the other. The roosters were crowing in the chicken-coops.

On the other side of the mist-shrouded river, opposite the Frette, a slight noise from time to time broke on the stillness of the air. Sometimes it sounded like the splashing of water, like the slow gliding of a boat on the river; sometimes it was a sharp report, like an oar striking planks, and more often it was like the thud of a soft body falling into the water. Then all would be silent again.

Once in a while, softly spoken words, which came perhaps from quite a distance or maybe from the immediate vicinity, drifted across the river, and lost themselves in the thick fog, for all the world like the wild birds that nest in the rushes and leave their resting-place at dawn to fly far away, and are seen a moment cleaving the mist with their sharp wings and uttering low, plaintive cries, that awaken their brethren all along the grassy slopes.

Suddenly, near the bank of the river and not far from

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the village, there appeared a faintly outlined shadow that grew and grew until, from the nebulous cloud that hung over the water, a flat boat, in which were two men, emerged and ran up against the water grasses.

The man who was rowing stood up and lifted a bucket filled with fish from the bottom of the boat; then he slung the dripping net over his shoulder. His companion, who had not stirred, uttered:

"Bring yer gun, Mailloche, guess we'll be able to get a shot at a rabbit or two."

The other tramp replied:

"All right. Wait fer me, I'll come in a minute."

And he moved off to find a hiding place for their supply of fish.

His name was Labouise, alias Chicot, and he was associated with his partner Maillochon, called Mailloche, for short, in the practice of the undetermined and questionable profession of mud-larking.

They were third-rate fishermen, and never went out regularly, excepting when they were forced to do so through bad times. The remainder of the time was spent thieving. They lurked night and day around the river and pounced on any prey they could find, living or dead. They were poachers, nocturnal hunters, who sometimes went after the deer of the Saint-Germain forest and sometimes after the corpses that floated down the river and whose pockets they relieved of whatever valuables they contained. They picked up rags, empty bottles that drifted along with the tide, stray logs that had become detached from crafts and led an easy and enjoyable life.

Sometimes they would leave their boat toward noon, and go for a stroll on land. They would dine in some

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inn on the banks of the river and start off again after their meal. They would remain on land a day or two and then, one fine morning, would be seen again in the rotten old tub they called their "boat."

Once in a while, at Joinville or at Nogent, some owner of a rowboat would deplore the loss of his craft, which had been stolen during the night; while at the same time, some twenty or thirty miles away, on the Oise, a retired bourgeois would rub his hands and admire the boat he had bought second hand for fifty francs from two men who had sold it to him spontaneously, because, they said, they liked his looks.

Maillochon reappeared with his gun wrapped up in a rag. He was a man of about forty or fifty years of age, tall and spare, with the keen eye of one who is worried by legitimate cares.

His open shirt revealed his powerful, woolly chest. But he looked as if he never had had more hair than a short bristly mustache on his upper lip and a little stiff tuft under the lower one. His temples were quite bare.

When he removed the flattened cake of dirt which was in reality a cap, his scalp appeared to be covered with a light down, like the body of a picked chicken about to be singed.

Chicot, on the other hand, was red and fat and juicy and bore a decided resemblance to a raw beefsteak.

He always kept his left eye closed, as if he were aiming at something or somebody, and when anyone teased him about it and yelled: "Open yer eye, Labouise," he would calmly reply: "Never you fear, sister, I open it when I need it." He was in the habit of calling every one "sister," even his business partner.

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He, in turn, seized the oars, and the boat shot out into the mist of the river, which was getting lighter and lighter under the pinkish glow of the sky.

Labouise inquired:

"What shot did ye take, Maillochon?"

"The smallest, the new kind; that's the stuff fer rabbits."

They neared the opposite bank so gently and slowly that not a ripple disclosed their approach. That side of the river belongs to the forest of Saint-Germain and limits the shooting-ground for rabbits. It is covered with rabbit-holes hidden under the roots of the trees and at daybreak the little animals put their noses out of the holes and scamper forth into the grass.

Maillochon, on his knees at the bow, his gun hidden in the bottom of the boat, was waiting.

Suddenly he clutched the rifle, aimed, and a moment later a sharp report rang loudly through the peaceful forest.

Labouise, with a few strokes of his oars, pushed the nose of the boat onto the bank, jumped out and, stooping, picked up a little gray rabbit struggling in the grasp of death.

Then the boat pushed off again and vanished in the fog, headed by its occupants toward the opposite river-bank in order to escape detection.

The two men seemed to be bent on pleasure, so leisurely did they proceed. The gun had been concealed under a board in the bottom of the boat and the rabbit had found a resting-place beneath Chicot's full shirt.

About fifteen minutes later Labouise inquired:

"Well, sister, shall we go after another one?"

And Maillochon answered:

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"Sure thing."

And the boat flew down the river like an arrow. The mist hovering over the water, had now begun to melt away and one could see, as if through a veil, the trees on the river banks.

As they approached the island, the point of which faces Herblay, the men rowed more leisurely and began to cast about cautiously for game. Soon, a second rabbit was shot and deposited with the first one.

They continued until they had rowed about half-way to Conflans; then they ceased plying the oars, made the boat fast to a tree, stretched themselves at full length on the bottom and went to sleep.

From time to time Labouise would raise himself to a sitting posture and scan the horizon with his one open eye. The last vapors of the early morning had evaporated and the blazing summer sun shone in the blue sky.

On the opposite side of the river, away off, rose the hill covered with vineyards. A single house stood on the top, surrounded by a cluster of trees. All was perfectly still.

But, on the tow-path, something was moving slowly and with infinite difficulty.

It was an old woman dragging a donkey by a rope. The beast, which was aged and stubborn, would make up its mind to advance one leg whenever it could no longer resist the efforts of its companion to drag it on, and thus it proceeded along the path, with its neck stretched out and its ears lying flat against its head.

The old woman tugged at the donkey with all her might and sometimes she would turn around and beat it with a branch.

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Labouise, who was watching the scene, exclaimed:

"Hey! Mailloche?"

Mailloche replied:

"Well, what's up?"

"D'ye want some fun?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Get on your pins, then, sister; we'll have it."

And Chicot picked up the oars.

When they reached the other side of the river and were opposite the old woman, he hailed her:

"Hey, sister!"

The peasant stopped tugging at the donkey and turned around.

Labouise went on:

"Going to the race course?"

The old hag made no reply. Chicot continued:

"Hey, guess yer old mule's won many a race! Where yer goin' at such a rate?"

At last the old peasant answered:

"I'm goin' to Macquart at Champoux to have 'im killed. He ain't worth nothing any more."

Labouise exclaimed:

"Sure he ain't. How much d'ye think ye'll get from Macquart?"

The woman passed her hand over her perspiring face and replied cautiously:

"How am I to know? Maybe three francs, maybe four."

Chicot cried:

"I'll give ye five for 'im, and ye won't have to run ye're legs off. That's a fine price for ye!"

After some moments of thought the old woman accepted.

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"Done," she said.

And the mud-larks landed. Labouise clutched the donkey's bridle.

Surprised, Maillochon asked:

"What yer going ter do with old Bones, pard?"

At this Chicot opened wide his half-closed eye to express his delight. His big red face shone with mirth and he chuckled:

"Never ye fear, sister, I've got a trick."

He gave five francs to the old hag, who sat herself down on the edge of the road to watch the proceedings.

Then Labouise in delight rushed off for the gun and handed it to Maillochon, saying:

"Each'll have his turn, old woman; we're goin' after big game now, sister. Not so near, damn ye, ye're goin' to kill him on the spot that way. We want ter get some fun out of it."

And he placed his companion about forty paces away from the victim. The donkey, freed at last, was trying to nibble the high grass of the river bank, but he was so exhausted that his legs shook under him as if he were going to fall.

Maillochon aimed carefully.

"Now fer some sand in his ears," he yelled; "look out, Chicot."

And with this he pulled the trigger.

The small shot tickled the donkey's long ears. The poor beast shook his head convulsively in an effort to rid itself of the smarting sensation.

Both men doubled up with laughter, but the old peasant jumped up in a fury and offered to hand back the money if they would return the donkey, for she could not see the animal tortured, she declared.

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Labouise threatened her with a flogging if she did not cease her wailing at once, and made a pretense at rolling up his sleeves.

He had paid, hadn't he? So all she had to do was to shut up. He would send a volley of shot into her skirts just to show her that it did not hurt.

She hobbled off, threatening to put the "gendarmes" on their trail, and they heard her insults for a long time as she proceeded down the road.

Maillochon handed the gun to his partner.

"Your turn now, Chicot," he said.

Labouise aimed and fired. The donkey received the shot in his legs, but it was so small that he probably thought he was being stung by horse-flies, for he beat his tail vigorously about his back and hind-quarters.

Labouise had to sit down and hold his sides, while Maillochon loaded the gun.

He stepped back a few paces and, aiming at the same place his comrade had chosen, he fired again. This time the donkey started, wheeled round and began to kick. A little blood issued from its wound. The shot had taken effect, for the animal began to make off as swiftly as its stiff legs would carry it.

The two men started in pursuit, Maillochon taking long strides and Labouise panting behind him as fast as he could go.

But the donkey, tired out, stopped after a while and watched the approach of his pursuers with bewildered eyes. Then, all a sudden, he opened his mouth and started to bray.

Labouise, gasping for breath, seized the rifle. This time he came close to the animal, for he had no desire to start on another race.

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When the old donkey stopped his mournful lay that sounded for all the world like a cry for help, the man, who had his own idea, yelled:

"Hey, Mailloche, come over here; he's going to get his medicine now!" And while his partner forced the donkey's jaws apart, he inserted the end of his rifle into its throat as if he were administering a dose of medicine; then he shouted:

"Hey, sister, look out now, down it goes!"

And he pulled the trigger. The donkey staggered back a few paces, fell on its hind-quarters, tried to rise, and finally toppled over on its side and closed its eyes. Its whole mangy body shook convulsively, its legs beat the air. A stream of blood gushed from between its jaws. After a little while its motions ceased. The poor animal was dead.

The men had stopped laughing; they certainly had been cheated out of their fun by the donkey's prompt demise.

Maillochon inquired:

"Well, pard, what's to be done with old Bones?"

Labouise replied:

"Never you fear, sister; got him in the boat now; we'll have our fun to-night."

And they went for their craft. The dead donkey was placed on the bottom and covered with grass and the two tramps lay down upon it and went to sleep again.

Toward noon, out of the secret recesses of the rotten boat, Labouise pulled a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, some butter and some raw onions, and they began to munch. After they finished their meal they stretched out again on the donkey and dozed off.

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At dusk, Labouise awoke, and shaking his partner, who was snoring like a steam engine, commanded:

"Time to get under way, sister."

And Maillochon obediently seized the oars. They rowed slowly down-stream, past the banks covered with iris and hawthorne bushes that let their heavy clusters of white and pink blossoms trail in the water and the clumsy boat glided between the big, flat leaves of the pond-lilies and bent their pale, scalloped chalices to one side.

When they reached the wall of l'Eperon, which separates the forest of Saint-Germain from the park of Maisons-Lafitte, Labouise made his companion stop rowing and laid his plan bare. As he proceeded, the other man, shaking with mirth, laughed long and silently.

They threw away the grass that covered the donkey's carcass, lifted the latter out of the boat and hid it in a thicket.

Then they jumped into the boat again and headed for Maisons-Lafitte.

It was quite dark when they entered the tavern conducted by old man Jules, innkeeper and "marchand de vins." As soon as the proprietor saw the two men he advanced and shook hands with them. He took a seat at their table and sundry matters were discussed.

Toward eleven o'clock, the last customer having taken himself off, old man Jules winked his eye at Labouise.

"Well, did ye get any?"

Labouise tossed his head and replied:

"Perhaps we did and perhaps we didn't."

The innkeeper insisted:

"Perhaps ye only got gray ones, eh?"

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Then Chicot, putting his hand in his cotton shirt, drew forth a rabbit and declared:

"They're worth three francs a pair."

A long discussion took place about the price. Père Jules agreed to give two francs sixty-five centimes for the pair and the two rabbits were handed over.

As the tramps were making ready to leave, père Jules, who was watching them closely, said:

"Ye've got somethin' else, but ye're not tellin' about it."

Labouise retorted:

"That's possible, but 'taint anything fer you, yer mean old rascal."

Old Jules, trembling with covetousness, tried to get him to talk.

"Fire away, pard, perhaps we'll come to terms."

Labouise, who seemed dubious about it, glanced at his companion meaningly and finally said very slowly:

"Well, it's this way, see? I was hidin' behind a clump of trees at l'Eperon when somethin' passed right in front of us almost, in the left bush, at the end of the wall. Mailloche fired at it and it fell. And both of us started to run, for we thought of the "gendarmes." I can't tell ye what it is, as I don't know myself. But it sure was somethin' big all right.

"What was it? If I told ye it would be nothin' but a lie, and ye know, sister, I wouldn't do that, not fer anythin'."

Old Jules could hardly contain himself.

"Mightn't it be a deer?" he gasped.

Labouise continued:

"Well, it might be a deer or somethin' like that. A deer . . . why, yes . . . Perhaps it's big-

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ger, even, looks somethin' like a roe. I don't say it's a roe, mind ye, fer I don't know myself, but it may be."

The innkeeper insisted:

"Perhaps it's a stag, eh?"

Labouise raised his hand.

"No, sir! It ain't a stag; I won't fool ye, it ain't a stag! I would have known it by the antlers. No, it ain't a stag."

"Why didn't ye take it along with ye, then?" demanded the man.

"Why, say, pard, 'cause we're goin' to sell on the spot, from now on. I've found a taker. You see, we were loafin' around and seen the thing and so naturally we shoots at it. No risk to run, see?"

The innkeeper was suspicious.

"Supposin' it weren't there now?" he said.

But at this Labouise raised his hand again.

"You bet it's there, it's dead sure. Ye'll find it in the first bush to the left. What it is, I ain't tellin', fer I don't know myself. I know it ain't a stag, I'm dead certain of that. But it's fer you to go find out what it is. We'll take twenty francs fer it, see?"

Père Jules still hesitated.

"What's the matter with bringin' it here?" he said.

Maillochon then spoke up:

"Aw, nothin' of the sort. If it's a deer, we want fifty francs fer it; if it's a roe, seventy; them's our prices."

The innkeeper gave in.

"Done; we'll make it twenty francs, pard." And they shook hands on it.

Then he went to the counter, took out four large five-franc pieces and handed them over to the partners.

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Labouise rose, emptied his glass and went out. As he vanished in the dark he turned around and said again:

"Sure, it ain't a stag. But what is it? . . . It's there all right, and I'll give ye back the coin if ye don't find it, pard."

And he disappeared in the night.

Maillochon, who was close on his heels, kept pounding him on the back to intimate his delight and appreciation.

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OUR PEASANTS

THE two homesteads stood side by side at a short distance from a fashionable summer resort. The sturdy peasants who owned the cottages worked hard to earn a livelihood for themselves and their families, which consisted, respectively, of the wife and four small children, the oldest of whom was six, while the youngest was barely two. In both homes the weddings, and afterwards the births, had taken place almost simultaneously.

The two mothers could hardly tell one child from the other, and as to the fathers, they experienced even greater difficulty in distinguishing their offspring. The eight names mingled confusedly in their minds, and when it was necessary to summon one of the children the men would often call three before getting the right one.

Coming from Rolleport, the first of the two cottages was owned by the Tuvache family, which, besides the father and mother, consisted of three daughters and one son, while the other homestead sheltered the Vallins, who had one girl and three boys.

The whole tribe subsisted most precariously on potatoes, soup and fresh air. At seven o'clock in the morning, at noon and again at six in the evening the two housewives would summon their respective broods and feed them, for all the world like herders gathering in a flock of geese. The children would sit down at the wooden table, which had been in use fifty years, the

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oldest occupying the head and the smallest the foot. The mother would then set before them a dish of bread, softened with water, in which a few potatoes, a small cabbage and three onions had been boiled, and the whole company would fall to and eat to their heart's content. The baby, whose chin just reached the edge of the table, would have to be fed with a spoon. Sunday, when a little meat would be added to the broth, was a gala day for all. The father would linger at the table and remark: "I guess I could get used to meat every day."

One August afternoon, a light dog-cart drew up in front of the cottages and the young woman who held the reins turned to the man at her side and exclaimed:

"Oh! Henri, look at all those children! Don't they look pretty, rolling around in the dust like that?"

The man made no reply, for he was used to these outbursts, which were a sorrow to him and which sounded almost like reproaches.

The young woman continued:

"I must kiss them! Oh! how I would love to have one of them, that cute little one over there, for instance."

And, alighting from the dog-cart, she ran to the children and picking up one of the smallest, she rained kisses on his smudgy face, his curly blond hair and his fat little hands, that fought to escape from her unwelcome caresses.

And then she jumped into her cart and drove off. But the following week she came again, sat herself down on the ground among the children, and taking the baby on her lap, filled him with cake, while she distributed candy to the other children. She played with them just like an overgrown child; her husband, in the

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meantime, sat patiently in the dog-cart and waited for his wife.

Soon afterwards she returned again and got acquainted with the parents, and after that she made her appearance every day, with her pockets bulging with pennies and sweetmeats.

Her name was Mme. Henri d'Hubières.

One morning her husband got out of the dog-cart with her. Brushing past the children, who knew her well by this time, Mme. d'Hubières entered one of the cottages.

The man and wife were both inside, cutting wood to cook the noonday meal; they started in surprise when they perceived the young woman and her escort and begged them to be seated. Then they waited for the visitors to explain their mission.

Mme. d'Hubières' voice quavered as she spoke:

"My good people, I have come to see you because I would like very much . . . I would like very much to take your little . . . your little boy . . . away with me . . ."

Both peasants were so astounded that they remained speechless.

Mme. d'Hubières caught her breath and resumed:

"We have no children; my husband and I are quite alone . . . We want to adopt him . . . Will you let me have him?"

The woman was beginning to understand a little.

"You want to have my Charlot?" she said at last. "Well, I guess not."

Then M. d'Hubières interposed:

"My wife did not explain herself properly. We would like to adopt the boy, but he could always come

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to see you. If he turns out well, and everything leads us to believe that he will, we will make him our heir. If, by chance, we should have any children he would share equally with them. But, should he not respond to our care, we would give him, when he attains his majority, twenty thousand francs that will at once be deposited in his name with a notary. We also wish to see to it that you shall lack nothing. So, until your deaths, we will allow you an income of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand my proposition?"

The farmer's wife rose to her feet in a fury.

"So you want me to sell you Charlot, do you? Well, I guess not! That's a fine proposition to make to a mother. Well, I should say not! Why, it would be a perfect abomination!"

The farmer remained silent and looked thoughtful, but he nodded approval at his wife.

Mme. d'Hubières burst into tears, and, turning to her husband, she sobbed with the voice of a spoiled child:

"Oh! Henri, they won't do it, they won't let me have him!"

The young husband resolved to make another attempt.

"Why, friends, think of the child's future, his happiness, his —"

But the farmer's wife interrupted him sharply:

"Yes, we've thought it all out, have heard your arguments, and our minds are made up. Get out now, and don't let me ever see you around here again! The idea of wanting to take a child away from its mother like that!"

As Mme. d'Hubières was going out she noticed that there were two small children playing on the doorstep.

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With the stubbornness of a willful, pampered woman, who will not relinquish the gratification of any whim, she inquired amid sobs:

"But the other baby doesn't belong to you, does he?"

Tuvache replied:

"No, he belongs to the people next door; you can go in there if you want to."

And he shuffled into the house, from whence proceeded the loud, indignant voice of his wife, raised in angry denunciation.

The Vallins were eating their noonday meal, consisting of hunks of bread spread sparingly with a little butter.

M. d'Hubières repeated his proposition, but this time he used more diplomacy and tact.

At first the farmer and his wife shook their heads in refusal, but, when they learned that they were to have an allowance of a hundred francs a month, they looked at each other dubiously.

For a long while both remained silent, buried in deep thought. Then finally the wife spoke up:

"Well, what do you say to it, father?"

The peasant answered in a deliberate voice:

"I say that it's not to be despised."

Then Mme. d'Hubières, who was trembling with anxiety, talked to them of the child's future and welfare and of all the money he would be able to give them later on.

The farmer inquired:

"That income of twelve hundred francs will be promised before a notary, won't it?"

"Why, of course, by to-morrow," M. d'Hubières replied.

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The woman, after another silence, resumed:

"One hundred francs a month isn't enough money to deprive us of the child; why, he will be able to work in a few years more; we must have one hundred and twenty francs."

Mme. d'Hubières, who was quivering with impatience, agreed to the terms at once, and, as she wished to take the child with her that very day, she gave the parents a present of one hundred francs while her husband made out an agreement. The Mayor and a neighbor were called in and acted as willing witnesses.

Then the young woman, with shining eyes, carried off the shrieking infant, as if it had been some long-coveted object in a shop-window.

The Tuvaches, stern and silent, stood in their doorway and watched them depart; perhaps they already regretted their refusal.

* * * * * * *

For many years nothing at all was heard of little Jean Vallin. His parents went every month to collect their allowance from the village notary and were bad friends with their neighbors because the Tuvache woman heaped insults upon them and repeated from house to house that "people must be monsters to thus sell their children and that it was a shame and a vile thing to have done."

She would pick up Charlot in her arms and exclaim with ostentation:

"I didn't sell you, my darling, I didn't sell you! I don't sell my children, I don't. I'm not rich, but I don't sell my children."

And this continued for years and years; every day coarse insults and rude jeers would be uttered on the

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Tuvaches' doorstep so that they would be heard in the cottage next door. The Tuvache woman ended by considering herself better than anyone else in the community, because she had not sold Charlot. And her neighbors would say of her:

"I know that it was an attractive proposition, but, after all, she acted the part of a good mother."

Her conduct was quoted, and Charlot, who was approaching eighteen years, and had been brought up with the idea that he had not been sold, thought himself superior to his companions through that very fact.

* * * * * * *

The Vallins managed to live in ease, thanks to their modest pension. Their oldest son went away to serve his time in the army and the second one died.

The burning hatred of the Tuvaches, who had remained wretchedly poor, came from this: Charlot stayed at home to help his father eke out a precarious living for his mother and two younger sisters. He was about twenty-one years old, when, one morning, a beautiful carriage drew up before the two cottages. A young man with a gold watch-chain jumped out and turned to assist an old white-haired lady to alight. The old lady said:

"It is over there, my child, the second cottage."

And the young man, with an air of assurance, entered the Vallins' homestead.

The old mother was washing out her aprons; the invalid father was dozing by the hearth. Both raised their heads as the door opened, and the young man cried:

"How are you, father; how are you, mother?"

The old people started in bewilderment. The old

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woman let her soap fall from her hand and quavered:

"Can it be you, child? Can it be you, child?"

The young man gathered her in his arms and kissed her faded cheeks, repeating as he did so:

"How are you, mother?"

While the old man, all in a tremble, kept saying in the deliberate tone which he never lost:

"So you've come back, Jean?" as if he had only seen him the month before.

After the greetings had been exchanged, the old couple took their son out to show him off to their friends. They called on the Mayor, the Mayor's assistant, the village priest and the teacher.

Charlot watched the proceedings from his doorstep. That evening, when he sat down with the family to supper, he exclaimed:

"You must have been fools to let them take the Vallin boy."

His mother answered stubbornly:

"I wouldn't sell my child."

The father was silent. The boy continued:

"It's a dreadful shame to be sacrificed in that way."

At this old man Tuvache raised his head and said angrily:

"I guess you're not going to blame us for having kept you!"

But the young fellow replied brutally:

"Yes, I am; you're a lot of fools. Parents like you ruin the lives of their children. You deserve that I should get out and leave you."

The old mother, with her head bent over her plate, was crying softly.

"That's it, kill yourself for your children!" she

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moaned, while she tried to lift a spoonful of soup to her mouth and spilled it over the table.

"I would rather not have been born than be what I am," resumed the boy angrily. "When I saw that other fellow a little while ago, my blood curdled. I said to myself: 'That's what I might be to-day.'"

He pushed back his chair and rose from the table.

"See here; I feel that it would be better for me to get out than to stay around here and reproach you all day long and make your life miserable! You see, I'll never, as long as I live, forgive you for what you have done!"

The bewildered father and mother whimpered, but said nothing.

Charlot continued:

"No, you see, it would be too hard on me. I would rather go away and earn my living somewhere else."

He opened the door. The sound of laughter and merry-making came from the other house. The Vallins were celebrating the return of their son.

Then Charlot stamped his foot, turned to the old people and cried:

"You fools!"

And vanished into the night.

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THE MALE-COURTESAN

HOW often we hear the remark: "He is a delightful fellow, but he is a courtesan, a real courtesan."

By this we mean the male-courtesan, the plague of our country. For, in France, we are all male-courtesans, that is to say, changeable, capricious, innocently false, without sequence in our convictions and will-power, violent and weak as women.

But the most irritating variety of the tribe is assuredly the Parisian and the "boulevardier" whose intelligence is more developed and who unites in his personality all the fascinations and faults of the erring sisterhood, exaggerated by his masculine temperament.

Our Chamber of Deputies is full of male-courtesans. They constitute the great majority of delightful opportunists that one is tempted to call "the charmers." They govern with sugary words and false promises, they press your hand so that you fancy you have gained a life-long friend, they gurgle "mon cher ami" to people they hardly know, change their opinions without being aware of it, enthuse over every new idea, are sincere in their ever-changing convictions, are duped as they dupe others, and forget the very next day the promises they made the night before.

The press is full of male-courtesans. Perhaps there are more of them in this profession than in any other one. But they are also more necessary here than any-

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where else. One must except certain sheets like "Les Débats" or "La Gazette de France."

Of course, every journalist must, to a certain extent, resemble a courtesan. He must comply with the whims of the public, be subtle enough to unconsciously follow the trend and shades of public opinion, be elastic and changeable, skeptical and credulous, devoted and cruel, enthusiastic and sarcastic, a believer in anything and an unbeliever in everything.

Foreigners, our anti-types, as Mme. Abel used to say, the dogged Englishmen and the stolid Germans, consider us, and always will consider us until the end of time, with a sort of amazement mingled with contempt. They call us frivolous.

It isn't that at all; we are only courtesans. And that is why we are liked in spite of our faults, why people come back to us in the end, in spite of everything they have said; it is only a lover's quarrel!

The male-courtesan, as he appears in society, is so delightful that he captivates you in five minutes. His smile seems made expressly for you. You cannot believe that his voice has not particularly pleasing intonations in your honor; when he leaves you, you imagine that you have known him at least twenty years.

You would be quite willing to lend him money should he ask you for any. He has captivated you like a woman.

If afterwards he employs strange proceedings in regard to you, you cannot feel angry with him, so charming is he when you meet him again. Does he make some excuse? You feel like begging his pardon. Does he lie? What an unbelievable thought! Does he

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fool you indefinitely with false promises? You are as grateful to him for these promises as if he had set the whole world topsy-turvy to do you a favor.

When he admires something, he goes into ecstasies over it and uses such apt expressions that you feel his admiration stealing over you, too. He used to adore Victor Hugo, but insists to-day that he is nothing but an old fogy. He would have died for Zola, whom he abandoned for Barbey d'Aurevilly. And when he admires anything, he admits no restrictions in his worship. He would slap your face if you differed with him, but when he himself starts in to condemn, his contempt knows no bounds.

In a word, he does not understand.

Listen to two courtesans exchanging confidences: "So you're mad at Julia?"—"I guess I am. I slapped her face."—"What did she do?"—"She told Pauline that I was awfully hard up twelve months out of the year and Pauline went and told it to Gontran. You understand, don't you?"—"Didn't you live together in the rue Clauzel?"—"We lived together in the rue Bréda four years ago, but we quarreled about a pair of silk stockings she insisted I wore—she had bought 'em at mère Martin's. It wasn't true at all, so I just blackened her eye and she got out after that. I saw her six months ago and she wanted me to join forces with her again, for she had taken an apartment twice as large as the other one."

You do not hear the rest, for you pass on.

But, on the following Sunday, you go to Saint-Germain and two girls get into the same railway carriage. You recognize one of them at once as Julia's enemy. Who is the other one? Why, it is Julia!

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And they gurgle and whisper and smile like cherubs; "Say, Julia. Listen, Julia," etc., etc.

The male-courtesan also has friendships of that sort. For three months wild horses could not part him from his friend Jacques, his dear old Jacques. There's only one Jacques in the whole world. Jacques alone has common sense, wit and talent. He alone counts for something in Paris. You meet them everywhere, in restaurants, on the boulevards, at the theater.

Three months later, if you happen to mention Jacques: "What a rascal, what a knave! I've learned to know him, I can tell you. Why, he's not honest even, and has such bad manners," etc., etc.

Six months later they are living together again. But, one fine morning, you learn that they have had a duel; at the same time you hear that they kissed and made up on the field of honor.

Notwithstanding all this, they are the best of friends, although six months out of the twelve they are at swords' points. They cherish and defame one another hysterically, are ready to shake hands after a quarrel, but are just as ready to smash each other's heads after a period of friendship.

For the friendship of male-courtesans is insecure, their feelings are subject to changes, their enthusiasm to eclipses. One day, they think the world of you, while the next they hardly look at you, because, after all, they have a courtesan's nature, a courtesan's fascination, a courtesan's temperament, and all their sentiments resemble the sentiments of a courtesan.

They treat their friends as our frail sisters treat their lap-dogs. The friend is the little pet which they feed on sugar and exhibit on silk cushions, but which

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they will fling out of the window in a moment of anger, and whose tail will be twisted, whose ribs will be crushed by affectionate arms and which once in a while will be plunged into a bucket of ice-cold water for no reason whatever.

And what a diverting sight is the love between a male-courtesan and a real courtesan! HE beats HER and SHE scratches HIM, they detest one another, they cannot endure each other and still they cannot part, for they are attached by some mysterious tie.

She deceives him and he knows it, but he only weeps and pardons. He uses the bed that another man pays for and believes himself irreproachable. He disdains and adores her without seeming to comprehend that she has just as much right to feel contempt for him. They will suffer intolerably and still cling together; they will hurl insults and accusations at one another, until at last, wrought up with hatred and rage, they fall into each other's arms and mingle their trembling lips and strange souls.

The male-courtesan is brave and cowardly at the same time; he has, more than any other man, an exaggerated sentiment of honor, but the sentiment of plain honesty is foreign to him; under favorable circumstances, he will lapse and commit infamies of which he will be quite unaware, for, without knowing it, he blindly obeys the vagaries of his impulsive mind.

To defraud a tradesman seems quite permissible and even righteous. Not to pay his debts is quite an honorable proceeding, unless they be gambling debts, which are of a somewhat questionable and therefore different character; he will dupe people under certain conditions countenanced by society, and if he happens to need

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money he will borrow from every available source and not hesitate to defraud the lenders, if possible; but he, with sincere indignation, would kill any man who even dared to suspect him of lacking delicacy.

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THE FRONTIER

I

THE railway carriage was filled after Cannes and as everybody knew everybody else, conversation was general. When Tarascon was reached someone remarked: "Here's where they are murdering people." And everyone spoke of the elusive and mysterious murderer who, for the last two years, has amused himself from time to time by killing some traveler. Each person indulged in suppositions and aired his opinion and the women peered out of the dark windows as if they expected to see a man suddenly appear before them.

And they all began to talk of various terrible experiences in railway carriages, like tête-à-têtes with madmen and other suspicious people, when escape was impossible.

Each man contributed a personal anecdote, showing that he had frightened and overpowered some ruffian under peculiar circumstances, with most wonderful and admirable coolness and presence of mind. A doctor who spent every winter in the South of France also had a story to contribute.

"As for myself," said he, "I've never had the opportunity to display my courage in anything of the sort you describe, but I once knew a woman — she was one of my patients — to whom happened one of the strangest and at the same time most mysterious and pathetic things you can imagine.

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"She was a Russian, Countess Marie Baranow, and was a most distinguished and beautiful woman. You know how handsome Russians are, or seem to be, with their delicate noses, their well-shaped mouths, their grayish, close-set eyes and their calm, imperious manner! There is something cruel and fascinating about them, something gentle and haughty, tender and severe, something most attractive for a Frenchman.

"But perhaps 'tis only the difference of racial type that makes me find so much fascination about them.

"Several years ago, her physician had discovered that she was threatened with consumption and had endeavored to get her to spend her winters in the South of France, but she stubbornly refused to leave Saint-Petersburg. But finally, last fall, the doctor, fearing the worst, notified her husband, who immediately made his wife start for Mentone.

"She took the train and had a whole compartment to herself, her 'suite' occupying another carriage. She was gazing disconsolately out of the window, watching the fields and the villages as the train rushed past them and feeling very lonely and sad. She had no children, hardly any family ties, and her husband's love had died long ago; was he not sending her to the other end of the world, alone, as one sends a sick retainer to the hospital?

"At each station a domestic named Ivan appeared to inquire whether his mistress needed anything. He was an old family servant, who was blindly devoted to her and who would have obeyed her in anything.

"Darkness had fallen and the train was going at high speed. She could not sleep and felt very nervous. All of a sudden the idea came to her to count the money that her husband had given her at the last minute, in French

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gold. She opened her wrist-bag and poured its contents into her lap.

"All at once a draught of cold air struck her face. She raised her head in surprise. The door had been opened. Countess Marie quickly threw her shawl over the gold in her lap and waited anxiously. A few moments elapsed and then a man appeared. He was in evening clothes, hatless and had a wound on his hand. He closed the door behind him, sat down, eyed his fellow-traveler anxiously and proceeded to wind his handkerchief around his bleeding wrist.

"The young woman almost fainted with fright. This man had surely seen her count her gold and had come to rob her of it and murder her.

"Suddenly he exclaimed:

"'Do not be frightened, madame!'

"She made no reply, for she was so overcome that she was unable to open her mouth; her heart beat wildly and her ears buzzed.

"He continued:

"'I am not a rascal, madame.'

"Still she was silent, but suddenly, at a slight movement she made, the gold in her lap poured onto the floor like a stream of water.

"The man looked at the metal in surprise and suddenly stooped over to gather it up.

"The Countess in the greatest alarm sprang to her feet and by so doing sent the money rolling all over the floor. She rushed to the door and was about to open it and fling herself on the tracks, when the man leaped to her side, seized her in his arms and forcibly restrained her. He pushed her down on the seat and holding her by the wrists exclaimed: 'Listen to me, madame, I am

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not a thief and I will prove it to you by picking up your gold and restoring it to you.

" 'But I'm a lost man if you do not help me to pass the frontier. I can't tell you anything beyond this. In one hour we will have reached the last Russian station; in an hour and a half we will be out of the Empire. If you do not help me, I am lost. And yet, madame, I have committed no crime against honor and have neither murdered anyone nor stolen. I swear that before God. But I cannot tell you more.'

" And kneeling down, he began to gather up the gold. Then, after he had put it all back in the Countess' wrist-bag, he handed the latter back to her without a word and took a seat in the opposite corner of the railway carriage.

" Neither of them moved nor spoke for some time. The Countess remained motionless and silent, still trembling with excitement, but growing calmer by degrees. While the man did not stir and stared straight ahead of him with a ghastly face. From time to time she threw him a rapid glance, but immediately lowered her eyes. He was an extremely handsome man, about thirty years old, with every appearance of refinement and breeding.

" The train was rushing through the darkness, blowing its shrill whistle and stopping at the various stations only to start off again after a few minutes. But suddenly it slowed up, the whistle blew several times and it stopped altogether.

" Ivan appeared at the door and awaited the Countess' orders.

" Countess Marie gave a last lingering look at her strange companion and then said in a trembling voice:

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" 'Ivan, I wish you to go back to the Count, as I no longer need you.'

" The bewildered servant opened his eyes wide with astonishment. He stammered:

" 'Why . . . mistress.'

" But she retorted:

" 'No, you are not coming with me. I have changed my mind. I want you to stay in Russia. Here, take some money for your return trip. Now give me your cap and your coat.'

" The old servant silently complied with his mistress' wishes, although greatly astounded, for the habit of blind obedience was strong within him. He took off his cap and coat and went away with tears overflowing in his eyes.

" The train started once more, rushing like mad toward the frontier. Then Countess Marie turned to her companion and said:

" 'These things are for you, monsieur; you shall be Ivan, my servant. I make one condition, however, which is that you must not speak a word to me, whether to thank me or for any other motive.'

" The stranger bowed without a word.

" Soon the train stopped again and officials in uniform entered the compartment. The Countess handed them her papers and motioning to the man sitting in the corner of the carriage, she said:

" 'That is my man, Ivan; this is his passport.'

" The train pulled out again.

" All night long they remained in the railway carriage without speaking a word.

" In the morning, when they drew into a German station, the stranger got out and waited at the door.

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"'I beg your pardon, madame, for breaking my word,' he said, 'but as I have deprived you of your servant, it is only fair that I should take his place. Do you need anything?'

"She replied coldly:

"'Please summon my maid.'

"He walked away to do her bidding.

"When she would get out of the train at some railroad station to go to the buffet, she noticed that he would be watching her. They arrived at Mentone."

II

The doctor paused in his story, then, after a few moments, he went on:

"One day, during my consulting hour, a tall man came into my office and said:

"'Doctor, I've come for news of Countess Marie Baranow. I am a friend of her husband, although I do not know her.'

"'The poor woman is doomed,' I replied. 'She will never see Russia again.' And suddenly that man began to sob, and rising, staggered out of the door like a drunken man.

"That very evening I told the Countess that a stranger had inquired about her health. She seemed moved and told me the whole strange story, just as I have related it to you. She added:

"'This man, whom I do not know, follows me about like a shadow; I meet him every time I go out; he looks at me in a peculiar way, but he has never spoken to me.'

"She thought a moment and then added:

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"'Why, I bet that he is beneath my windows this very minute.'

"She rose from her "chaise-longue," parted the curtains and showed me the man who had called at my office, sitting on a bench in the Promenade with his gaze riveted on the hotel.

"Then I became a witness to a most amazing and painful spectacle; the silent love of these two beings who were utter strangers to one another.

"The man loved her with the devotion of a beast that has been saved from death. Guessing that I had discovered his secret, he came to my office every day to inquire: 'How is she getting along?' And he wept pitifully every time that he saw that she was growing paler and more emaciated.

"She said to me:

"'I have only spoken once to this odd man, and yet it seems to me as though I had known him for years.'

"And when they would meet she would acknowledge his bow with a gracious and charming smile. I knew that she was happy, she, the lonely, doomed woman, happy to be loved in that manner, with that devotion and respect and exaggerated poetry. And still, true to her exalted obstinacy, she desperately refused to meet him, to know his name, to speak to him. She would say: 'No, no, it would spoil the friendship for me. We must remain strangers to one another.'

"As for the man, he must certainly have been a sort of Don Quixote, too, for he never tried to meet her. To the last he wanted to keep the absurd promise never to speak to her which he had made her in the railway carriage.

"Often, during the long hours she had to spend re-

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clining on her 'chaise-longue' she would rise and peek through the curtains to see if he were there. And when she had seen him, always sitting motionless on the bench, she would turn away with a happy smile on her face.

"She passed away one morning at about ten o'clock. As I was leaving the hotel, he came up to me with a distorted face; he had already heard the sad news.

"'I would like to see her for just a minute, with you,' he said.

"I passed my arm through his and together we went to her rooms. When we stood before the dead woman, he seized her hand and imprinted a long, ardent kiss on it. Then he rushed out of the door like a madman."

The doctor paused again and then added:

"That certainly is the strangest adventure I have ever known. Men surely are peculiar creatures."

A woman murmured in a low tone:

"Those two people were not as mad as you suppose . . . They were . . . they were . . ."

But she could not continue, for sobs choked her. And, as the conversation was rapidly changed in order to enable her to recover her self-possession, what she had intended to say was never learned.

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THE CRIPPLE

THE following adventure happened to me about 1882:

I had just made myself comfortable in the compartment of a train and was hoping that I would be lucky enough to keep it all to myself, when the door was suddenly thrust open from the outside and I heard a man's voice exclaim:

"Be careful, monsieur; we are just at the crossing; the step is high."

Another voice answered:

"Have no fear, Laurent; I will take hold of the straps."

And presently a head covered with a soft felt hat appeared in the opening of the door; two hands clutched the hanging straps on either side and slowly lifted a massive body into the compartment.

After the man had hoisted himself into my presence I noticed that he had wooden legs for I could see two black stumps protruding from the edges of his trousers.

Another head appeared behind the traveler and inquired:

"Is everything all right, monsieur?"

"Yes, everything's all right."

"Well, then, here are your crutches and the parcels."

And a servant, who bore the look of a veteran soldier, climbed into the railway carriage with a lot of bundles neatly tied up in black and brown paper and

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arranged them methodically in the net above his master's head. Then he said:

"That is all, monsieur; the candy, the doll, the drum, the gun and the pâté de foies gras."

"Very well, Laurent."

"I trust you will have a pleasant trip, monsieur."

"Thank you; take care of yourself, Laurent."

The man went away, after closing the door behind him. I turned to look at my fellow-traveler.

He was about thirty-five years old, although his hair was almost white; he wore a military cross and was extremely stout, as are most strong and active men whom some infirmity has rendered helpless.

He mopped his brow, breathed heavily several times and then looked straight at me and inquired:

"Do you mind if I smoke, monsieur?"

"No, monsieur."

His voice, his face, his eyes, all seemed familiar to me. But when and where had I met him before? I certainly knew that man, I was sure that I had shaken hands with him and that we had conversed together. It had occurred at some moment of the past, for the recollection of it lurked in the recesses of my mind, where the happenings of earlier days were stored away.

The stranger, too, gazed at me with the intentness of a man who remembers having seen you before, but who cannot place you.

After a while we looked away, embarrassed by our mutual scrutiny, but, a few minutes later, our eyes met again, as if attracted by the work going on in our brains.

Then I said:

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"Mon Dieu, monsieur, instead of studying each other on the sly, we had better unite our efforts to find out where we have met before."

My neighbor replied graciously:

"You are quite right, monsieur."

I introduced myself:

"I am Judge Henry Bonclair."

He hesitated a moment and then he exclaimed, with the vagueness of eye and voice that accompanies a great mental effort:

"Why, certainly, I met you at the Poincel's, before the war, about twelve years ago!"

"Yes . . . why . . . why . . . aren't you Lieutenant Revalière?"

"Yes . . . I was even Captain Revalière, before I lost both my feet by a cannon ball."

And we looked at each other again intently.

I remembered perfectly having seen that slight, handsome officer who was a leader of cotillons and who displayed such grace and impetuousness in that capacity that he had been nicknamed "The Cyclone." But back of this recollection, which I evoked distinctly, floated something which I could not recall at once, some story which had been told me and which I had forgotten, one of those bits of gossip to which one pays a kindly but fleeting attention and which hardly leave a trace in one's mind.

It was some sort of love affair, I think. I remembered vaguely that love had been connected with what I had heard, so vaguely that the sensation could have been compared to the slight scent that the foot of a deer leaves on the ground for the trained nose of the hunting dog.

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Little by little, however, the shadows grew lighter and the figure of a girl rose before my mind's eye. Then her name burst upon my mind like a flash, Mlle. de Mandal. Now everything came back to me. It was, after all, rather a commonplace story. The girl was in love with the young officer when I met him and there was some talk of their approaching marriage. The young fellow himself seemed happy and very much in love.

I raised my eyes to the net where the various parcels brought by my neighbor's servant lay in a row and the man's voice rang in my ears, as if he had just ceased speaking:

He had said:

"There, monsieur, that's all. There are five parcels, the candy, the doll, the drum, the gun and the 'pâté de foies gras.'"

Then, in a second, I had composed a whole romance in my head. It was exactly like all those that I had read and in which sometimes the man and sometimes the girl marries his, or her, sweetheart, after some financial or physical catastrophe. Thus, after the war, that mutilated officer had gone back to his beloved and she, faithful to her promise, had married him.

I thought it very fine in her, but also quite natural, just as one thinks natural the endings of books and plays. When one is enjoying a good play, or reading some thrilling novel, one invariably believes that one would have sacrificed oneself as willingly and as impulsively as the hero. But when, on the following day, some wretched friend tries to borrow a little money, one feels distinctly annoyed.

Then, all at once, another idea, far less poetical and

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more realistic than my first conception, occurred to me. Perhaps he had married her before the war, before the frightful accident that cost him both legs. Perhaps she was now compelled, poor woman, to receive, console, nurse and comfort this husband who had gone forth in all the strength of his manhood, to return an almost helpless wreck, subject to crutches and ever increasing "embonpoint."

Was he happy or was he wretched? A desire which at first was quite slight, but which rapidly assumed undue proportions, seized upon me to hear his story or at least to learn the principal points, so that I might supply any deficiency which might willfully or unconsciously occur in his narrative.

Notwithstanding the fact that I was filled with these thoughts, I continued to talk to him and we exchanged a few commonplace remarks; with my eyes fastened on the parcels I was thinking: "So he has three children. The candy is for his wife, the gun and the drum for his boys and the doll for his little girl."

Suddenly I asked:

"Are you a father, monsieur?"

He replied:

"I am not, monsieur."

I suddenly felt as if I had committed an unheard of breach of "étiquette," and I hastend to add:

"I beg your pardon. I thought so because I overheard your man speaking of toys. Sometimes one cannot help overhearing a conversation and one jumps at conclusions."

My neighbor smiled and murmured:

"No, I'm not even married. You see, I remained at the starting-post."

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I acted as if something had just dawned upon me.

"Ah! quite true, you were engaged when I met you to a Mlle. de Mandal, I believe."

"Yes, monsieur; you have a very good memory."

At this I became excessively bold and added:

"Yes, and I believe that I also heard that Mlle. de Mandal had married monsieur . . . monsieur . . ."

"M. de Fleurel," he calmly replied.

"Yes, that's the name. Why, I even remember now that there was some question of your accident . . ."

I looked him straight in the eye and he blushed violently.

His heavy face, to which a constant flow of blood already lent a purplish tint, became more congested than ever.

He replied sharply, with the sudden animation of a man who is pleading a lost cause, a cause that is lost in his own heart and mind, but that he would like to win before public opinion:

"People are wrong, monsieur, to connect my name with that of Mme. de Fleurel. When I returned from the war, without my feet, I never, never would have allowed her to marry me. Why, the very idea was preposterous! When a woman marries, monsieur, it is not to make a show of generosity; it's to live every minute of her life with a man, and if the man happens to be a cripple, like myself, she condemns herself to lifelong torture. Oh! I can understand and appreciate all kinds of sacrifices, but I do not believe in a woman renouncing all her hopes of happiness, all her dreams, to satisfy the admiration of outsiders. When I hear

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the noise of my wooden stumps and crutches on the floor I almost go crazy. Do you think that I could ask a woman to put up with what I cannot endure myself? And do you think that my legs are nice to look at?"

He paused. What could I say?

I thoroughly appreciated his view of the matter. Could I blame the girl, criticize her or feel contempt for her? No. Still, this commonplace average, veracious ending did not satisfy my poetical tendencies. Those heroic stumps demanded a fine sacrifice and I had been cheated out of it. It filled me with keen disappointment.

Presently I asked:

"Has Mme. de Fleurel children?"

"Yes, two boys and a little girl. The toys are for them. Mme. de Fleurel and her husband have been very kind to me."

The train was steaming up the slope of Saint-Germain. It passed through the tunnels, entered the depot and stopped.

Just as I was going to offer my arm to the mutilated soldier to assist him down the steps, two hands reached forward and grasped him.

"How'd do, my dear fellow?"

"Ah! how are you, Fleurel?"

Behind the husband stood the smiling, radiant wife. She was still attractive and from time to time she threw little "bonjours" to the cripple with the tips of her gloved fingers. A little girl at her side was jumping up and down on the platform, while two small boys opened round eyes at the sight of the gun and drum that were being handed to their father from the net.

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When the cripple at last stood on the platform all the children went up and kissed him. Then the whole party started off in the direction of Saint-Germain. The little girl skipped along merrily by the side of the maimed man, with one little hand laid tenderly on the bar of his crutch as she would have clung to the thumb of any other grown-up friend.

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MONSIEUR MARAMBOT opened the letter which had been handed to him by his servant, Denis, and smiled.

Denis, who had been with him twenty years, was a thick-set, jovial little man, quoted in the whole community as a model servant. Presently he inquired:

"Is monsieur glad? Has monsieur received some good news?"

M. Marambot was not wealthy. He was a retired druggist and a bachelor, and lived off a tiny income derived from a small capital which he had had a good deal of trouble to amass by selling various pharmaceutical products to the peasants of the region. He replied:

"Yes, my good man. Old Malois is backing out of the suit I had threatened to institute against him; I will get my money to-morrow. Five thousand francs are quite a bit to add to the savings of an old bachelor like myself."

And M. Marambot rubbed his hands joyfully at the thought. He was a resigned sort of man, with a mournful, rather than a jovial, temperament, and was absolutely incapable of any sustained effort in pursuing business success.

He would have acquired a much larger competency had he taken advantage of the deaths of various established colleagues in several important business centers, to take over their pharmacies. But the trouble of moving and the thought of all the things he would

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have to undertake had always kept him from making a change; so, after considering the matter for a day or two, he would simply conclude:

"Pshaw! I'll wait till the next opportunity comes along. I'll lose nothing by waiting. Perhaps something much better will yet come my way."

Denis, on the contrary, was always urging his master to make a change. He was an active, energetic man and liked to repeat:

"Oh! Had I ever had any capital, I would have made a fortune! Only one thousand francs and I would have seen my way clear!"

M. Marambot would only smile at this declaration and vouchsafe no reply. He would go into his little garden and walk slowly up and down with his hands behind his back, absorbed in dreams.

All that day Denis sang around the house; he even displayed unusual industry, for he washed all the windows with great energy, the while he bawled out his refrains at the top of his lungs.

M. Marambot, surprised by the unwonted alertness of his servant, smilingly remarked several times:

"If you work so hard to-day, my good man, you won't have anything left to do to-morrow."

The following day, at nine o'clock in the morning, the postman handed Denis several letters for his master, one of which was quite heavy. M. Marambot shut himself up at once in his room and remained there until late in the afternoon. When he came out, he gave his man four envelopes to take to the post-office. One of these was addressed to M. Malois and undoubtedly contained the receipt for the money.

Denis asked no questions of his master; he seemed

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to be as sad and depressed now as he had been cheerful and lively the day before.

Night came and M. Marambot retired to his bedroom and soon was sound asleep.

In the middle of the night he was awakened by a peculiar noise. He raised himself to a sitting posture and listened attentively. But, all of a sudden, his door was pushed open and Denis, as white as a ghost, appeared on the threshold with a candle in one hand and a large kitchen knife in the other; his eyes were bulging out of his head and his lips and cheeks were twitching convulsively, as if he were laboring under some violent emotion.

M. Marambot, greatly bewildered, thought that his servant had suddenly developed somnambulistic tendencies and he was about to leap out of bed to awaken him, when suddenly the fellow blew out the candle and made a rush for his master. The druggist spread his hands before him to receive the shock which, when it came, sent him sprawling on his back; then he madly endeavored to seize the man's arm in order to parry the blows that he rained on the bed. M. Marambot was now thoroughly convinced that his servant had gone mad.

The knife he wielded struck the druggist on the shoulder, on the forehead and on the chest. M. Marambot fought desperately to escape and jerked his hands and feet madly about in the dark, the while he shouted:

"Denis! Denis! Are you mad, Denis!"

But the crazed and panting man kept on slashing right and left, although repulsed vigorously by hand and foot. M. Marambot was struck again on the thigh

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and on the abdomen. But suddenly a thought flashed through his mind and he yelled:

"Hold on there, Denis, hold on! I didn't get the money."

The fellow stopped on the spot, and his master could hear his gasping breath in the dark.

M. Marambot immediately proceeded:

"I did not receive it. M. Malois has gone back on his word, and my suit is going to be pressed, after all; that's why I gave you those letters to mail. Besides, you can read the ones that are lying on my desk."

And with a supreme effort he reached over for some matches which were lying on a little table near his bed and lit his candle.

He was covered with blood and so were the walls. The curtains and bed-clothes were dripping and scarlet, and Denis, bespattered from head to foot, stood in the middle of the room.

When M. Marambot took in all this he thought he surely was going to pass away and lost consciousness.

He came to at daybreak. It was some time before he could gather his scattered thoughts and remember the happenings of the night before. But all of a sudden the whole recollection of the attempted murder and of his wounds came back to him and he was so overwhelmed by it that he closed his eyes to shut out the sight. But in a little while he grew calmer, and began to reflect. He had not died on the spot, so the chances were that he would recover. Of course he felt very, very weak, but he experienced no sharp pain, although several parts of his body felt extremely uncomfortable. He also

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had the sensation of being cold and wet and tied up in bandages. He reflected that this moisture must have come from the blood he had lost, and horrified shudders ran through his frame as he thought of all that red liquid which had oozed out of him and which covered the bed. The mere idea of looking upon such an awful sight upset him to such an extent that he kept his lids tightly shut as if they might possibly fly open without his consent.

What had become of Denis? In all probability he had by now escaped from the house.

But what was he, Marambot, to do? Should he get up and call for help? But if he made the slightest motion his wounds would surely reopen and then he would bleed to death.

Suddenly he heard his door open softly. For a moment his heart stood still. It must be Denis, who was coming to finish him up. He held his breath, so that the murderer would think that everything was over, that his work had been well done.

He felt someone raise the bed-clothes and gently touch his abdomen, whereupon an acute pain shot through his hip. Now he was being gently bathed with cool water. A great joy overwhelmed him; but a remainder of prudence led him to simulate unconsciousness. With infinite precaution he opened one eye.

He perceived Denis himself standing beside his bed! Mercy! He quickly shut his eye.

Denis! What on earth was he doing! What did he want? What devilish plan was he hatching now? What was he doing? Why, he was washing him, so as to hide the traces of his crime! And perhaps he would

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bury him in the garden, ten feet under the sod, so that he would be well out of the way. Or perhaps in the cellar, under the bottles of fine wine.

And M. Marambot began to shudder so violently that his whole frame shook.

"I'm lost, I'm lost," he thought, and closed his eyes tighter than ever to shut out the vision of the descending knife. But it did not descend. Denis was now raising him in the bed and bandaging him. Then he carefully treated the wound in the thigh as he had learned to do when his master, M. Marambot, was the village druggist.

For a man in the business, doubt was no longer possible; the servant, after having attempted murder, was now trying to save his victim's life.

So M. Marambot, in a weak voice, proceeded to give him some practical directions:

"Wash out the wounds and dip the bandages in water, to which add a weak solution of carbolic."

Denis replied:

"That's just what I am doing, monsieur."

Then M. Marambot opened both eyes. There was not a spot of blood to be seen anywhere, neither on the bed, nor in the room, nor on the murderer. The wounded man was reclining on immaculate white sheets.

The master and his servant looked at each other.

Finally M. Marambot in a gentle tone said:

"Denis, you have committed a great crime."

To which Denis replied:

"I am repairing the damage I wrought, monsieur. If you will not denounce me, I will serve you as faithfully as in the past."

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Realizing that this was not a time to incur the displeasure of his servant, M. Marambot closed his eyes and muttered:

"Denis, I swear that I will not denounce you."

Denis saved his master's life. He watched night and day at his bedside, gave him his medicine and his potions, felt his pulse with keen anxiety, and altogether took care of him with the skill of a trained nurse and the devotion of a son.

Every little while he would say:

"Well, monsieur, how are you feeling now?"

And in a weak voice M. Marambot would answer:

"A little better, my good man, thank you."

Sometimes, at night, when the sick man woke up, he would find his nurse sitting in an armchair close by the bed, weeping.

Never before had the retired druggist been so spoiled and pampered.

In the beginning he had thought:

"As soon as I get on my legs again, I'll rid myself of that scoundrel."

But, although he was now convalescing, he put off from day to day the accomplishment of this design.

He bethought himself that no one would give him the care that Denis did and that he had a hold over the man; and he warned Denis that he had made a will in which he, Marambot, denounced him, Denis, to the authorities in case anything of the sort ever occurred again.

This wise precaution would protect him, thought the druggist, against any future attempt at violence; and he wondered whether it would not be more expedient to keep the man in his service, in order to have an eye on

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him, than to send him away and thus lose track of him.

As in the past, when he used to hesitate to acquire new business interests, he could not make up his mind to take the step that would rid him of his servant.

"There'll always be time enough," thought M. Marambot.

Denis continued to be a model domestic. M. Marambot was cured. So he kept him.

But one morning, just as he was finishing breakfast, the former druggist heard a commotion in the kitchen. He ran to the spot whence the noice proceeded and beheld Denis battling with two powerful "gendarmes." The "brigadier" was jotting down evidence in a notebook.

As soon as he laid eyes on his master, the man began to sob and stammer:

"You denounced me, monsieur! How could you, after you swore that you wouldn't? You have broken your word of honor, M. Marambot; it was very, very wrong of you!"

In the greatest bewilderment, M. Marambot raised his hand:

"I swear before God, my good man, that I have not denounced you. I am absolutely at a loss to know how these gentlemen ever learned that you tried to murder me."

The "brigadier" gave a start.

"You say that this man tried to murder you, monsieur Marambot?"

The bewildered druggist replied:

"Why . . . yes, he did . . . but I did not denounce him . . . I didn't say anything about it . . . I swear that I never breathed a word to

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anybody . . . he has been a good servant ever since . . ."

The brigadier spoke in a severe tone:

"I shall note your evidence. The law will take care of this new phase of the affair, of which we were quite ignorant, believe me, monsieur Marambot. I am compelled to arrest your man for having stolen two ducks, which he took surreptitiously from M. Duhamel. We have witnesses to prove the theft. I beg your pardon, monsieur Marambot, for inconveniencing you and I shall certainly submit your testimony."

And turning to his men he commanded:

"Forward, march!"

The two gendarmes dragged Denis away with them.

* * * * * * * *

The lawyer for the defense had invoked insanity and had made use of the two criminal acts to strengthen his plea. He proved clearly that the larceny of the ducks had resulted from the same mental condition that had prompted the attempt to kill monsieur Marambot.

He had analyzed with great skill the different phases of temporary insanity and concluded his defense by stating that his client would, without doubt, be cured, if he were committed for a certain length of time to some sanitarium.

He had spoken in glowing terms of the lifelong devotion of the honest and trustworthy servant, and of the wonderful care he had given the master he had wounded in a fit of mental aberration.

Touched to the heart at the recollection of Denis' devotion, M. Marambot felt tears well to his eyes.

The lawyer noticed his emotion and spreading his

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arms with their flowing sleeves until they looked like the wings of a bat, he shouted in enthusiastic tones:

"Behold, gentlemen of the jury, behold those tears! What more can I say in behalf of my client! What arguments, what oration would be as good as the tears that this man's master is shedding! They speak louder than I could speak, louder even than the law; and they seem to say: 'Have mercy on the demented wretch!' These are tears which implore, which pardon, which bless!"

He stopped and resumed his seat.

Then the judge, turning to Marambot, whose testimony had been all in favor of his servant, inquired:

"But, still, monsieur, even admitting that you considered the man crazy, that does not explain to us why you kept him. He was very dangerous to have around."

Monsieur Marambot wiped his eyes and replied:

"Well, you see, your Honor, it is so hard to get any servant nowadays . . . I don't think that I could have gotten a better one . . ."

And Denis, after being acquitted, was placed in a sanitarium at his master's expense.

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A SUNDAY OUTING

IN the office, père Mongilet was considered a character. He was an old clerk of the jovial, easy-going type and had never been out of Paris but once in his whole life.

It was then near the end of July, and every Sunday each one of us would plan an outing in the suburbs. Asnières, Argenteuil, Châtou, Bougival, Maisons and Poissy, all had their partisans. The advantages and demerits of each one of these famous and delightful resorts, so patronized by clerks, were enthusiastically discussed at full length.

Then old Mongilet would say:

"What silly sheep you are! A fine lot of places, really!"

"Well, and how about yourself, père Mongilet? Don't you ever go on an outing?"

"Indeed I do. I take omnibus rides. After I've had a good dinner at the 'marchand de vin' downstairs I take a plan of Paris with its indications of omnibus lines and transfer points and I make out my itinerary. Then I jump on an omnibus, climb on top, open my umbrella and away we go! Oh! I see a great many more things than you do, I can tell you; I change my routes constantly. It's like taking a trip around the world, so different are the inhabitants of the various quarters of the city. I know Paris better than any other man, I can tell you that. And then nothing is funnier than the first-floor flats. With one glance you

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can take in the strangest sights . . . You can reconstruct a whole household drama by seeing the face of some furious man; and how funny it is to watch a barber leave his lathered customer to peer out for a second into the street! You can make eyes at all the girls and it won't cost you a cent, for you haven't got the time to climb down and run after them. Ah! I should say you could see things!

"It's like going to the theater. It's Nature's theater, and you can take it in on the top of a 'bus. "Cristi," you bet I wouldn't swap my outings for your silly excursions!"

"Just try it for once, Mongilet; come on out to the country and see how you like it," we urged.

"I did go once," he replied, "about twenty years ago, and I'll never be caught again."

"Tell us about it, Mongilet, do," we clamored.

"Very well, then. Here's what happened. You all knew Boivin, didn't you, the former clerk we called Boileau?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Well, he worked in my department. That man had a house in Colombes and he used to invite me to spend a Sunday with him. He would say:

"'Come on, Maculotte (he used to call me Maculotte for fun), you'll see what a splendid time we'll have.'

"Well, I fell in like a fool, and one morning I took the eight o'clock train for Colombes. I arrived in a sort of dingy country town, where there was nothing to see for miles around, and finally I discovered, at the end of an alley, between two high walls, an old wooden door with a rusty bell.

"I rang the bell.

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"I waited quite a while and then at last someone opened the door. 'What was it?' I couldn't make out at first whether it was a woman or a baboon. It was old and ugly and wrapped in filthy rags, and it seemed to be vicious. It had a lot of pin-feathers sticking all over its hair and appeared to want to devour me.

"'What do you want?' she demanded.

"'I want to see M. Boivin,' said I.

"'What do you want to see M. Boivin for?'

"By this time I was feeling distinctly uncomfortable under the cross-examination of the old hag and I blurted out:

"'Why . . . . . he expects me.'

"'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'so you're the man who is coming to dinner?'

"I uttered a trembling affirmation.

"Then, turning toward the house, she shrieked:

"'Hey, Boivin, here's your man!'

"The old hag was my friend's better-half. Boivin appeared instantly on the threshold of a kind of plaster hut, roofed over with zinc and which greatly resembled a foot-warmer. He wore a pair of soiled duck trousers and a filthy panama hat.

"After shaking hands with me he led the way into what he termed his garden.

"This is what it was: At the end of another alley formed by huge walls lay a little square patch of ground as big as a handkerchief, surrounded and enclosed by tall houses, which prevented the sun from reaching it save during one or two hours of the day. Some carnations, pansies, geraniums and a few rose-bushes were dying in this stuffy yard, which was rendered unbear-

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ably hot by the reverberation of the sun on the neighboring roofs.

"'We have no trees,' explained Boivin, 'but the high walls are just as good. It's as shady here as in the woods.'

"Then he caught hold of one of my vest-buttons and whispered in my ear:

"'I want you to do me a favor. You've seen the wife. She isn't very easy to get along with, is she? To-day, as I had invited you, she gave me a clean suit to wear, but if I should get a spot on my clothes everything would be spoiled, so I will look to you to water the plants.'

"I acquiesced. I took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves and started for the pump. It was a wheezy, asthmatic sort of affair and I worked ten minutes before the watering-can was filled. I was dripping with perspiration. Boivin directed the operations.

"'Here . . . this plant needs some . . . just a little more. That's enough . . . now for this one.'

"The watering-can leaked and my feet received a more copious bath than the flowers. The edges of my trousers were soaked and mud-stained. I traveled back and forth twenty times or more between the squeaky pump and the dilapidated flowers, wetting my shoes and perspiring like a day laborer. And when I intimated that I wanted to stop and take a rest old Boivin would seize me by the arm and beg:

"'Just one more can, just one, and then we'll stop.'

"He thanked me by giving me a large rose, which, when I put it in my button-hole, fell to pieces, leaving

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nothing but a little green pear as hard as a stone sticking on the lapel of my coat. I was quite astonished, but I made no comment.

"Presently we heard the voice of Mme. Boivin calling us from the house:

"'Well, I hope you'll make up your minds to come in now; everything is waiting!'

"We went into the foot-warmer.

"If the garden was in the shade, the house, on the other hand, received the full glare of the sun, and the hot-room of a Turkish Bath is less uncomfortable than was Boivin's dining-room.

"Three plates flanked by three dirty pewter forks were laid on a white kitchen table. In the middle of the table stood a dish containing beef stew. We fell to.

"A big decanter filled with pinkish water attracted my eye. Boivin turned to his wife with some embarrassment.

"'My dear, in honor of the occasion, won't you let us have a little pure wine?'

"She glared at him furiously.

"'So that you'll get drunk and hang around the house all day hollering? No, thank you!'

"He made no reply. After the stew, she brought in a dish of potatoes cooked with lard. When it was eaten, not a word was spoken during the meal, she said:

"'Well, that's all. Now get out.'

"Boivin stared at her in amazement.

"'But what about the pigeon — the pigeon you were picking this morning?'

"His wife laid her hands on her hips.

"'I suppose you haven't had enough to eat? Just because you bring people home to dinner is no reason

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to devour everything there is in the house, is it? What would I have for my supper to-night, I would like to know?'

"We rose at once from the table.

"Boivin whispered to me:

"'Just wait a minute and we'll go out.'

"Then he walked into the kitchen, where his wife had already retired, and this is what I heard:

"'Let me have twenty sous, dearie.'

"'What are you going to do with that money?'

"'Why, one never knows what may happen! One should always have a little money for emergencies.'

"'No,' she shrieked, so that her voice would reach my ears, 'I won't give you twenty sous! As long as that man had dinner here, the least he can do is to pay your expenses of the day.'

"Old Boivin came out to me. As I wished to be civil, I bowed to the hostess and stammered:

"'Madame — let me thank you — most gracious welcome —'

"'That's all right,' she replied. 'But don't you dare bring him home drunk, for, if you do, you'll be responsible to me.'

"So we started out.

"We had to walk across a plain as bare as a desert under the boiling sun. I stooped to gather a green plant I noticed in the road and gave a sharp cry of pain. It burned my hand like fire. They call those things nettles. Then the whole place smelled so dreadfully that it turned my stomach.

"Now and then, Boivin would say:

"'Just a little more patience, we'll soon be at the river.'

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"Well, we got there at last. It smelled of slime and dirty water, and the sun fell on it with such strength that it almost blinded me. I begged Boivin to let us go somewhere and refresh ourselves. He conducted me to some sort of place filled with 'longshoremen and kept apologizing all the way:

"'It doesn't look like much,' he said, 'but it's really a very nice, comfortable place.'

"As I was ravenous, I ordered an omelet. But at the second glass of wine I poured out for him, that old fool Boivin became intoxicated, and then I realized why his better-half was so particular about giving him only tinted water.

"He pushed back his chair, began to make a speech, and wanted to supplement it with an exhibition of athletics. Then he got mixed up in a quarrel with two drunken 'longshoremen, acted as pacifier and would have had his head broken had it not been for the proprietor of the place, who came between him and his aggressors.

"I dragged him away as best I could and deposited him gently at the foot of the first bush I could find. I laid down beside him, and it seems that I dozed off, too.

"We must have slept a long time, for when I awoke it was quite dark. Boivin was snoring beside me. I shook him and he scrambled to his legs; he was still intoxicated, but less so than at first.

"And so we started homeward across the plain, in the darkness. Boivin, who pretended to know the way, made me go first to the right and then to the left, and then to the right again. We could see neither the heavens above us nor the ground beneath our feet, and got

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tangled up in a sort of forest consisting of sticks, that reached to our noses. It seems that we were wandering around in a vineyard. Not a lamp-post to be seen anywhere. We stumbled about for perhaps an hour or two, almost crazy, turning, tripping, feeling our way, but invariably coming back to our starting-point.

"Finally Boivin fell over a stick and tore his cheek. He picked himself up unconcernedly, sat down on the ground, and yelled: 'La-i-too' at the top of his voice, while I cried 'Help, help,' with all the strength of my lungs, at the same time lighting match after match to guide our rescuers and to embolden myself.

"Finally, a belated peasant heard our cries and put us in the right road.

"I took Boivin home. But, just as I was going to leave him at the threshold of the house, the door suddenly flew open and his spouse appeared, carrying a lighted candle. She gave me a terrible fright.

"As soon as she saw her husband, for whom she had probably been waiting since nightfall, she made for me, shrieking:

"'Ah! *canaille!* I knew you would bring him home drunk!'

"Well, I ran, I assure you, and never stopped till I reached the station and, as I felt sure that the old hag was following me, I locked myself in the toilets and did not come out till the train, which was not due for a half hour, steamed into the depot.

"That's why I have never married and why I never, never go out of Paris."

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AN IDYLL

THE train had just left Genoa, "en route" for Marseilles, and was following the rocky and sinuous coast, gliding like an iron serpent between the sea and the mountains, creeping over the yellow sand edged with silver waves and entering into the black-mouthed tunnels like a beast into its lair.

In the last carriage, sat a large woman and a young man. They did not speak, but occasionally they would glance at each other. She was about twenty-five years old. Seated by the window, she silently gazed at the passing landscape. She was from Piedmont, a peasant, with large black eyes, a full bust and fat cheeks. She had deposited several parcels on the wooden seat and she held a basket on her knees.

The man might have been twenty years old. He was thin and sunburned, with the dark complexion that denotes work in the open. Tied up in a handkerchief was his whole fortune; a pair of heavy boots, a pair of pants, a shirt and a vest. Hidden under the seat were a shovel and a pick-axe tied together with a rope.

He was going to France to seek work.

The sun, rising in the sky, spread a fiery light over the coast; it was toward the end of May and delightful odors entered into the railway carriage. The blooming orange and lemon-trees exhaled a heavy, sweet perfume that mingled with the breath of the roses which grew in profusion along the railroad track, as well as

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in the gardens of the wealthy and the humble homes of the peasants.

Roses are so completely at home along this coast! They fill the whole region with their dainty and powerful fragrance and lend a taste of wine to the atmosphere, that is almost intoxicating.

The train was going at slow speed as if loath to leave behind this wonderful Garden! It stopped every few minutes at small stations, at clusters of white houses, only to pull out again leisurely, emitting long whistles. Nobody boarded it. One would have thought that all the world had gone to sleep and made up its mind not to travel on that sultry Spring morning. The plump peasant woman from time to time closed her eyes, but she would open them suddenly whenever her basket slid from her lap. She would catch it, replace it, look out of the window a little while and then doze off again. Tiny beads of perspiration covered her brow and she breathed with difficulty, as if suffering from a painful oppression.

The young man had let his head fall on his breast and was sleeping the sound sleep of the laboring man.

All of a sudden, just as the train pulled out of a small station, the peasant woman woke up and opening her basket, drew forth a piece of bread, some hard-boiled eggs, a flask of wine and some fine, red plums. She began to munch contentedly.

The man had also wakened and he watched the woman, watched every morsel that traveled from her knees to her lips. He sat with his arms folded, his eyes set and his lips tightly compressed.

The woman ate with relish. Every little while she

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would take a swallow of wine to wash down the eggs and then she would stop for breath.

Everything vanished, the bread, the eggs, the plums and the wine. As soon as she finished her meal, the man closed his eyes. Then, feeling a little crowded, she loosened her waist and the man raised his lids again.

She did not seem to mind and continued to unbutton her dress.

The pressure of her flesh causing the opening to gape, she revealed a portion of white linen chemise and a portion of her skin.

As soon as she felt more comfortable, she turned to her fellow-traveler and remarked in Italian: "It's fine weather for traveling."

"Are you from Piedmont?" he asked.

"I'm from Aste."

"And I'm from Casale."

They were near neighbors and they began to talk.

They exchanged the common-place remarks that working people repeat over and over and which are all-sufficient for their slow-working and restricted minds. They spoke of their homes and found out that they had a number of mutual acquaintances.

They quoted names and became more and more friendly as they discovered more and more people they knew. Short, rapid words, with sonorous endings and the Italian cadence, gushed from their lips.

After that, they talked about themselves. She was married and had three children whom she had left with her sister, for she had found a situation as nurse, a good situation with a French lady at Marseilles.

He was going to look for work.

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He had been told that he would be able to find it in France, for they were building a great deal, he had heard.

They found nothing to talk about after that.

The heat was getting to be terrible; it beat down like fire on the roof of the railway carriage. A cloud of dust flew behind the train and entered through the window, and the fragrance of the roses and orange-blossoms had become stronger, heavier and more penetrating.

The two travelers went to sleep again.

They awakened almost at the same time. The sun was nearing the edge of the horizon and shed its glorious light on the blue sea. The atmosphere was lighter and cooler.

The nurse was gasping. Her dress was open and her cheeks looked flabby and moist, and in an oppressed voice, she breathed:

"I have not nursed since yesterday; I feel as if I were going to faint."

The man did not reply; he hardly knew what to say.

She continued: "When a woman has as much milk as I, she must nurse three times a day or she'll feel uncomfortable. It feels like a weight on my heart, a weight that prevents my breathing and just exhausts me. It's terrible to have so much milk."

He replied: "Yes, it must be very annoying."

She really seemed ill and almost ready to faint. She murmured: "I only have to press and the milk flows out like a fountain. It is really queer. You wouldn't believe it. In Casale, all the neighbors came to see it."

He replied: "Ah! really."

"Yes, really. I would show you, only it wouldn't

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help me. You can't make enough come out that way."

And she paused.

The train stopped at a station. Leaning on a fence was a woman holding a crying infant in her arms. She was thin and wretched-looking.

The nurse watched her. Then she said in a compassionate tone: "There's a woman I could help. And the baby could help me, too. I'm not rich; am I not leaving my home, my people and my baby to take a place, but still, I'd give five francs to have that child and be able to nurse it for ten minutes. It would quiet him and me too, I can tell you. I think I would feel as if I were being born again."

She paused again. Then she passed her hot hand several times across her wet brow and moaned: "Oh! I can't stand it any longer. I believe I shall die." And with an unconscious motion, she completely opened her waist.

Her right breast appeared all swollen and stiff, and the poor woman gasped: "Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! What shall I do?"

The train had left the station and was continuing its route amid the flowers that gave forth their penetrating fragrance.

Once in a while a fishing smack glided over the blue sea with its motionless sail, which was reflected in the clear water as if another boat were turned upside down.

The young man, embarrassed, stammered: "But — madame — I — might perhaps be — be able to help you."

In an exhausted whisper, she replied: "Yes, if you will be so kind, you'll do me a great favor. I can't stand it any longer, really I can't."

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He got on his knees before her; and she leaned over to him with a motherly gesture as if he were a child. In the movement she made to draw near to the man, a drop of milk appeared on her breast. He absorbed it greedily and began to drink regularly and slowly.

He had passed his arms around the woman's waist and pressed her close to him in order not to lose a drop of the nourishment. And he drank with slow gulps, like a baby.

All of a sudden she said: "That's enough, now the other side!" And he obeyed her with alacrity.

She had placed both hands on his back and now was breathing happily, freely, enjoying the perfume of the flowers carried on the breeze that entered the open windows.

"It smells mighty good," she said.

He made no reply and continued to drink at the living fountain of her breast, closing his eyes to better taste the mild fluid.

But she gently pushed him from her.

"That's enough. I feel much better now. It has put life into me again."

He arose and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

While she replaced her breasts inside her waist, she said:

"You did me a great favor. I thank you very much, monsieur!"

And he replied in a grateful tone:

"It is I who thank you, madame, for I hadn't eaten a thing in two days!"

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OUR ENGLISH NEIGHBORS

A LITTLE note-book was lying on the upholstered seat of the railway carriage. I picked it up and opened it. It was a diary which some tourist had lost.

I give below a copy of the last three pages.

February 1st.— Mentone, metropolis of Consumptives, celebrated for its pulmonary tubercules. Very different from the tubercule of the potato, that grows and thrives in the earth to nourish man, this kind of growth thrives and flourishes in man to fatten and nourish the earth.

I got this scientific definition from a learned and delightful local physician.

I look for a hotel. I hear about the *Grrrand* Hôtel de Russie, d'Angleterre, d'Allemagne, and des Pays-Bas. Mentally commending the cosmopolitan intelligence of the proprietor, I install myself in the latter hospital. It is so large that it appears quite empty.

Then I go for a walk around the town, which is very pretty, and is located at the foot of an imposing mountain (see guide-book). I meet a lot of sick-looking people accompanied by bored-looking individuals. Here you can find the extinct muffler. (Notice to those naturalists who are inclined to worry over it's disappearance.)

Six o'clock.— I go back to the hotel for dinner.

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The table is set in a large room that was built to seat three hundred guests and that harbors just twenty-two.

Presently they file in. First appears a tall, lean Englishman, clad in a long frock-coat, the sleeves of which imprison the gentleman's thin arms like an umbrella casing covers an umbrella. This garment, that recalls the civilian dress of a retired army officer, also the clothes of a war veteran, and the gown of a priest, is ornamented down the front with a row of buttons covered with black cloth, like their owner, and set close together like a battalion of wood-lice. Opposite the buttons is a row of button-holes, which seem to be waiting for the buttons, and awaken suggestive ideas in the beholder.

The vest is closed in a similar manner. The owner of this garment does not look very jocular.

The Englishman bows to me; I return the compliment.

Second Entrance.—Three ladies, three Englishwomen, the mother and two daughters. Each of them wears a dish of whipped cream on her head, a fact which arouses the wildest surprise in me. The daughters look as old as the mother and the latter looks as ancient as the daughters. All three are thin, tall, slow-mannered and stiff; and they have teeth that grow outside of their lips to scare away bold men.

Other guests enter, all Englishmen. Only one man is ruddy and fat. He wears side-whiskers. Each woman, (there are fourteen in all), wears a dish of whipped cream on her head. I notice that this strange headgear seems made of white tulle or lace, I cannot tell which. It does not seem to be sweetened. All the ladies, in fact, seem to have been preserved in vinegar,

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although there are five young girls among them who are passable, but as flat as boards and with no visible sign of hope.

I inwardly quote the stanzas of Bouilhet:

"Qu'importe ton sein maigre, ô mon object aimé
On est plus près du cœur quand la poitrine est plate,
Et je vois, comme un merle en sa cage enfermé
L'amour, entre tes os, rêvant sur une patte!" *

Two of the young men, they are younger than the first Englishman, are also clad in tight sacerdotal garments. They are lay-priests, who may have wives and children, and are called "pastors." They look cleaner, more serious and less agreeable than our own priests. I wouldn't exchange a barrel of these against a ton of the former. Every one to his taste.

As soon as every one is seated, the older pastor arises and says "grace" and everyone listens with rapt attention.

My food being thus consecrated against my personal wishes, to the God of Israel and of Albion, everyone becomes engrossed in the soup.

A solemn silence prevails in the dining-room, a silence that cannot possibly be natural. I suppose that my presence is obnoxious to the tribe into which, until now, no black sheep had entered.

The women, especially, display an attitude of frigid conservatism, as if they were afraid of having their little headdress of whipped cream fall into their soup-plates.

* "You are thin, my beloved, but what of that?
One is nearer the heart when the breast is flat,
Like a bird in its little cage, I see
Love fluttering in your heart for me!"

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However, the chief-pastor addresses a few words to the assistant-pastor. As I unfortunately understand a little English, I learn that they are continuing a conversation begun before dinner on the texts of the prophets.

Everybody listens with the utmost attention.

Then they proceeded to feed me, always in spite of my personal feelings, on impossible quotations.

"I will give water to him that is parched," said Isaiah. I was not aware that he had said such a thing. In fact, I was not familiar with any of the great truths emitted by Jeremiah, Malachi or Daniel.

They entered my ears like buzzing flies, those simple truths and raised pandemonium in my brain.

"Let him who is hungry ask for bread."

"The fig-tree bears figs and the palm-tree bears dates."

"He who listeneth not, retaineth not wisdom."

How much deeper and greater is our own Henri Monnier, who placed in the mouth of one man, the immortal Prud'homme, more striking truths than were ever uttered by all the prophets that ever lived.

In contemplation before the Ocean, he cries: "How beautiful, but how much wasted land!"

He formulates in a few words the eternal policy of the world: "This sword is the happiest day of my life. I shall use it to defend the Government that gave it to me and, if need be, I shall use it to attack it."

If I had had the honor of being introduced to the English society which surrounded me, I should have edified them with quotations from our great French prophet.

As soon as dinner was over we repaired into the

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salon. I sat in a corner all alone. The Britishers seemed to be conspiring on the opposite side of the room.

Suddenly a lady walked to the piano.

I thought to myself:

"Ah! a little 'miousique!' So much the better."

She opens the instrument, seats herself before it and the whole tribe gathers around her like a battalion, the women to the front, the men behind them. Are they going to sing an opera?

The chief-pastor, transformed into a choir-master, lifts his hand, brings it down again, and a blood-curdling clamor rises from all these people. They are singing a hymn!

The women shriek, the men bellow, the window-panes shake. The hotel dog sets up a howl in the court-yard and another dog answers him from a guest-chamber.

I flew out of the room, bewildered and enraged and went for a walk. As I could discover nothing in the way of a place of amusement, I was compelled to go back to the hotel.

The English people were still singing.

I went to bed. Until midnight the praises of the Lord were sung in the most odious, rasping, horrible voices I have ever heard, and I, crazed by that terrible spirit of imitation which impelled a whole nation to execute a death-dance, kept humming under the sheets:

I'm sorry for the Lord, the Lord of Albion,
Whose praises are being sung in the salon,
If the Lord's ears are tender in the least,

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And He loves talent and beauty, He's having a feast.
If He likes good music and wit and art,
I pity the good Lord with all my heart.

And when I was finally able to close my eyes I had the most terrific nightmare. I fancied I saw prophets riding on pastors and voraciously consuming whipped cream from death-heads.

Horror of horrors!

February 2nd.— As soon as I was dressed, I asked the proprietor of the hotel whether the savages who had invaded his place were in the habit of daily practicing their barbarous pastime.

He replied with a smile:

"Oh! no, monsieur; yesterday was Sunday, you know, and Sunday is sacred with them."

I retorted:

Nothing is sacred to a pastor,
Not even the dinner, or slumber, or
Ears of the poor traveler.
But do not let it happen again,
Or without delay I'll take the first train.

A little astonished, the hotel man promised that he would look into the matter. During the day I took a very pretty walk in the mountain.

In the evening they said "grace" again. Then we filed into the parlor. What were they going to do? I wondered.

All of a sudden the same woman, who, the night before, acted as accompanist, rises and goes toward the

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piano. She begins to play . . . a waltz. And the young ladies begin to dance.

The chief-pastor keeps time by slapping his knee, so accustomed to keeping time is he.

The Englishmen approach the ladies and the fluffy headgears spin round and round the room.

Well, it's better, anyway. After the waltz came a quadrille and a two-step.

As I haven't been introduced, I cower alone in a corner.

February 3rd.—Another delightful walk to the old castle. It is a beautiful ruin in the mountain. On each cliff of this mountain stands some remnant of a stronghold.

Nothing is more charming than these old citadels amid the rocks, with the snowy peaks of the Alps in the distance (see the guide-books). This place is really beautiful.

At dinner I introduce myself, after the French fashion, to my neighbor. She does not respond. British courtesy, I suppose.

In the evening, English ball.

February 4th.—Excursion to Monaco (see guide-books).

At night, another English ball. I look on as if I were in quarantine for the plague.

February 5th.—Excursion to San Remo (see guide-books).

In the evening, English ball.

I am still in quarantine.

February 6th.—Excursion to Nice (see guide-books).

In the evening, English ball. I retire to my room.

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February 7th.— Excursion to Cannes (see guide-books).

In the evening, another dance. I take a cup of tea all alone in my corner.

February 8th.— Sunday, great revenge. I was waiting for the cads. They had assumed the religious aspect they wore on the previous Sunday, and were preparing their voices for the praises of the Lord. But, before dinner, I crept into the parlor and abducted the key of the piano and hid it in my pocket. Then I said to the hotel clerk: "If messieurs the pastors ask for the key of the piano, tell them that I took it and send them to me."

At dinner they discussed several obscure points in the Gospel, elucidated the texts and shed light on the genealogy of several biblical characters. Then we went into the salon and they made for the piano. Great astonishment. They consult among themselves. The tribe seems dumfounded. The dishes of whipped cream look as if they were about to fly away.

Finally the chief-pastor moves off and goes out. When he returns, the discussion is resumed and the whole company glares angrily at me.

All of a sudden, the three ministers walk over to me in the proper order. They look like ambassadors, and really are quite impressive. They bow. I arise, and the oldest one acts as spokesman:

"Môsieu, on me avé dit que vô avé pris la clef de la piano. Les dames vodraient le avoir, pour chantê le cantique."

I reply:

"Monsieur l'abbé, I understand perfectly that the ladies would like the key. You are a religious man,

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monsieur, and so am I, and my principles do not permit me, for they are more rigorous than yours, I dare say, to allow you to profane the Sabbath as you do. I cannot allow you, messieurs, to use, for the purpose of praising the Almighty Lord, an instrument that, all the week, has been grinding out dance music. We do not give public dances in our churches and we do not use our organs for quadrilles. The use you have made of this piano fills me with righteous indignation. You may convey my answer to the ladies."

The pastors, dumfounded, retired. The ladies looked very uncomfortable. And they praised the Lord without the piano.

February 9th — noon.— The hotel-keeper has just requested me to leave. I am thrown out in obedience to the unanimous request of the English people.

I meet the three ministers, who seem to be watching my departure.

I head straight for them and I make a bow.

"Messieurs," say I, "you seem to be well acquainted with the Scriptures. I have, myself, given some attention to these matters. I even understand a little Hebrew. Well, I am anxious to submit to you a question which has greatly troubled my catholic conscience.

"You consider incest an abomination, I believe? Well, the Bible gives us an example that is most upsetting to a believer.

"Lot, fleeing from the burning city of Sodom, was seduced, as you know, by his two daughters, and, being deprived of his wife, who had been changed into a pillar of salt, he succumbed to temptation. From this dual and horrible incest sprang Ammon and Moab, who were the founders of the two great races, the Ammon-

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ites and the Moabites. Ruth, the gleaner, who awakened Boaz to render him a father, was a Moabite.

"Has not Victor Hugo said:

Ruth a Moabite,
Crouched at the feet of Boaz, with bare breast,
Hoping that some unknown ray of light
Would, at his awakening, reward her quest.

"The unknown ray gave birth to Obed, who was the forefather of David. Was not Jesus Christ a descendant of David?"

The three pastors vouchsafed no reply and looked at one another in consternation. I continued:

"You will say that I am speaking of the genealogy of Joseph, the legitimate, although useless, consort of Mary, Mother of Christ.

"Well, Joseph, as everyone knows, was in no way responsible for the birth of his son. So it is Joseph who sprang from an incestuous bond, you will say, and not the Saviour. I agree with you. Still, I will add two remarks. The first one is that Joseph and Mary, being cousins, must have sprung from the same family; the second is that it is a shame to make people read ten pages of genealogy for the nonce.

"We ruin our eyes reading that A engendered B, who engendered C, who engendered D, who engendered E, who engendered F, and when we are almost exhausted by this eternal repetition, we arrive at the last individual, who engenders nothing. One might call that, messieurs, reaching the highest form of hoaxing."

At this, the three pastors, like one man, turned on their heels and fled.

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Two o'clock.—I take the train for Nice.

Here the diary ended. Although these notes reveal extreme bad taste and vulgarity in the author, I believe, nevertheless, that they will warn certain travelers against English tourists.

I feel in duty bound to add that there are some charming English people. But, generally speaking, they are not those whom one happens to meet at a table d'hôte.

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WE went on deck after dinner. There was not a ripple on the whole Mediterranean, whose smooth surface shone like silver under the great moon. The big steamer shot a column of thick black smoke toward the starlit sky and in our wake the water was white and foamy, as if it were nothing but bubbling moonlight.

Our party consisted of six or eight men, all of whom were gazing admiringly and in rapt silence at the distant shores of Africa, whither we were bound. The captain, who was smoking an after-dinner cigar, suddenly took up the conversation where it had been left off.

"Yes," he said, "that day I was badly frightened. My ship stayed on the rocks six hours. Luckily, we were picked up toward evening by an English collier that saw our plight."

Then a tall man with a sun-burned face and dignified bearing, one of those men who have been in strange lands and have braved terrible dangers and whose eyes seem to have retained in their depths something of the fantastic sights they have seen, spoke for the first time:

"Captain, you say that you were frightened. I do not believe it. You use a wrong word and the sensation you felt was not that of fear. An energetic man never feels afraid before actual danger. He may be anxious, he may be restless, but fear is something entirely different."

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Laughingly, the captain replied:

"Well, I don't know about that; I only can say that I was badly frightened that time."

Said the man with the sun-burned face, in a slow voice:

"Allow me to explain my meaning. Fear (and the bravest men can experience it), is sometimes terrible, a dreadful sensation; it can be compared to the decomposition of the soul, and is a frightful spasm of the heart and mind, the mere recollection of which sends shudders through our frame. But, if a man is courageous, that never happens in the face of certain death, nor in the face of any known form of peril; it only occurs in certain abnormal instances, when a person is laboring under some strange influence, or when in the face of vague and unknowable dangers. Real fear is like a reminiscence of the fantastic terrors of past ages. A man who believes in ghosts and who imagines that he sees one, must experience the sensation of fear in all its atrocious horror.

"As for myself, I had a presentiment of what it must be, one day, about ten years ago, and I experienced the full sensation of it last winter, during a night in December.

"I've taken many chances in my life and have had any number of adventures that were desperate enough. I've had many duels, I've been attacked and almost beaten to death by robbers. In America, once, I was sentenced to be hanged as a rebel, while another time I was thrown overboard by mutineers off the Chinese coast. Each of those times I thought that my hour had come, and I made up my mind quickly to face the inevitable. I scarcely felt any emotion or regret.

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"But fear is something very different.

"I have had a touch of it in Africa, although it is the offspring of the North; the sun makes it vanish like mist. You know, gentlemen, that the Orientals place little value on life; if one of them has to die, he makes up his mind at once; their nights are as free and void of legends as their souls are void of the morbid anxieties which haunt the brains of Northern men. A panic may occur in the East, but fear is unknown there!

"Well, this is what happened to me in that weird country of Africa:

"I was crossing the downs that lie to the south of Ouargla. It is one of the strangest places in the world. Of course you all know the smooth, flat sand of Ocean beaches? Well, just imagine the Ocean changed into sand during a hurricane; imagine a silent storm with motionless waves of yellow dust, as high as mountains and as tumultuous as real breakers. The blazing southern sun sheds its full glare on this raging sea. You have to climb up one side of these golden waves and slide down the other, without respite or protection of any kind from the sun. The horses sink up to their knees in the soft sand and stumble and foam at the mouth.

"Our little party consisted of a friend and myself, with an escort of eight 'spahis' and four camels, with their keepers. We spoke not a word, for we were well nigh exhausted and our parched throats were as dry as the desert that stretched in front of us. Suddenly one of the men gave a sort of startled cry; we all stopped and remained motionless in our saddles from sheer amazement at a startling and unaccountable phenomenon known to all travelers in those wild regions.

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"From somewhere in the immediate vicinity, we were unable to determine the exact location, came the sound of a beating drum, the mysterious drum of the downs. The sound was perfectly distinct. Sometimes it would increase or decrease in volume and then it would stop altogether, only to begin again after a little while.

"The Arabs were almost scared to death and exchanged terrified glances. One of them uttered in his strange tongue: 'Death is upon us.' And all of a sudden my friend, who was as dear as a brother to me, toppled from his horse, stricken with sun-stroke.

"And during the two mortal hours in which I tried everything I knew to save him, that drum filled my ears with its strange, monotonous, incessant beatings. And I felt fear, genuine, horrible fear, creep over me at the sight of the corpse of my beloved friend in that dreadful African hole scorched by the sun and enclosed by four hills and where, at a distance of at least two hundred miles from any French village, the echo brought us the sound of a rapidly beating drum.

"That day I realized what it was to feel fear; I realized it even more fully another time . . ."

The captain interrupted the speaker to inquire:

"Excuse me, sir, but what was the drum, after all?"

The traveler resumed:

"I really cannot tell you. Nobody knows. Officers who have often heard the sound attribute it to the multiplied and magnified echo of sheets of sand hurled by the wind against clumps of dry grass; for it has been noticed that the phenomenon always takes place in the neighborhood of small plants that the heat of the sun has rendered as dry as parchment.

"According to that, the drum would, as it were, only

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be a sort of sound mirage. But I only learned that later.

"Now I will relate my second experience.

"It was last winter and I was in a forest in the northeastern part of France. Night came two hours before its time, so dark was the sky. My guide was a peasant, who walked alongside of me in the narrow path, under a dome of pine-trees that shook and groaned under the furious wind. Between the tree-tops I could see the clouds hurrying past like a scattered army and they looked as if they were fleeing from some unknown horror. At times, under a dreadful gale of wind, the whole forest would bend in one direction and utter a moan of distress. In spite of my heavy clothing and rapid motion, the cold was beginning to penetrate me to the marrow.

"We were to put up over night at a game-keeper's home, and we were rapidly approaching the cottage. I had planned to spend a few days in the forest to hunt.

"From time to time the guide would raise his eyes and mutter: 'Bad weather, this.' Then he spoke to me of the people who were to be our hosts. The old man had killed a poacher two years ago, and since then he had grown morose, as if he were haunted by the recollection of his deed. His two married sons lived with him.

"The darkness was terrible. I could not distinguish a thing and the sighing trees filled the night with incessant rumors. At last I saw a light, and after a little while my companion knocked on a door. Several shrill cries answered from within. Then a tremulous man's voice demanded: 'Who goes there?' My

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guide identified himself. We were admitted and I was confronted by a scene that I shall never forget.

"An old, white-haired man, with staring eyes, was standing in the middle of the kitchen, his fingers closed in a convulsive clasp around a loaded rifle, while two sturdy young men with axes were guarding the door. Two women, their faces buried in their hands, were crouching in a dark corner of the room.

"When we explained that we wished to remain over night, the old man stood the rifle against the wall and ordered the women to prepare our sleeping quarters. But, as they made no move to carry out his command, he turned to me abruptly and said:

"'You see, monsieur, I killed a man two years ago this very night. Last year he came back and called me, and I expect he's coming to-night.'

"Then, in a voice that made me smile, he added:

"'We don't feel very comfortable, you understand.'

"I reassured him as best I could, although, in my heart, I was glad to have come that very night, so that I might witness the manifestation of that superstitious terror. I told stories and succeeded in quieting almost every one present.

"Near the hearth an old and half-blind dog was dozing with his nose between his paws. He looked for all the world like some people I've seen.

"Outdoors the storm was raging with great violence and the little house shook under the furious wind. Through a narrow window set near the door I could see the trees sway and the lightning flash through the black clouds.

"In spite of my efforts to cheer them, I could feel that these people experienced a mysterious dread and

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each time that I ceased talking, they would strain their ears to catch any unwonted sound.

"Tired of witnessing such stupid conduct, I was about to ask to be shown to my bed, when suddenly the old game-keeper leaped to his feet, rushed for his gun and shouted: 'There he is now! I can hear him!' The women fell on their knees and hid their faces and the two sons clutched their axes.

"I was going to try to quiet them once more, when, all at once, the sleeping dog awoke. He lifted his head, looked at the fire with his dim eyes and let out one of those mournful howls that so often startle travelers in the country at night.

"We all watched him. He arose and stood perfectly still on his four paws, as if haunted by some vision, and then he directed another howl at something invisible to us, unknown, but which must have been ghastly to look upon, for he bristled from end to end.

"The old man, turning as white as a sheet, yelled: 'He smells him! he smells him! He was with me when I killed him!' And both women, crazed with fear, began to moan in accompaniment to the dog.

"In spite of all, a shudder ran down my spine. The sight of the animal at that time and place, and among those terrified people, was horrible beyond description.

"For one whole hour the dog howled without moving; he howled as if in the throes of a nightmare, and fear, horrible, stealthy fear, was slowly taking possession of me; fear of what? How can I tell? It was fear, and that's all I know.

"We remained motionless and terror-stricken, with strained ears, throbbing hearts and trembling limbs,

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momentarily expecting some dreadful thing to happen. The dog began to wander about the room sniffing the walls. He made us perfectly crazy! All of a sudden, the peasant who acted as my guide jumped up in a sort of paroxysm of frenzied terror, seized the animal by the throat, opened a little door leading into the yard and hurled it into the darkness outside.

"The dog stopped howling on the spot and we remained in a dead silence that was more terrifying than the noise.

"Suddenly we all gave a start; some creature was creeping along the outer wall, going in the direction of the woods; it passed the door and seemed to feel it with a hesitating hand; for two minutes, which almost made lunatics of us, we heard no sound; then the creeping creature returned and scratched lightly on the door like a child might do with its nail, and then, all of a sudden, a head appeared at the window. It was a white head and it had flaming eyes like a wild-cat. And a murmur came from its lips, an indistinct sound that resembled a plaintive moan.

"A minute afterwards a terrific explosion shook the kitchen. The old game-keeper had shot at the thing. Quick as a flash the two sons rushed to the window and barricaded it with a massive kitchen table and sideboard.

"And I swear to you that that shot, which was so absolutely unexpected, froze my blood in my veins and made me feel as if I were going to give up the ghost.

"We stayed in the kitchen until daybreak, for we were powerless to move or utter a sound, so completely unnerved were we.

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"When a narrow ray of light pierced through the shutters we decided to open the door.

"At the foot of the wall, near the door, lay the old dog, his jaw broken by a bullet.

"He had gotten out of the yard by digging a hole under the fence."

The man with the sun-burned face paused; then he added:

"That night I ran no danger whatever, but I would rather live over all the real perils I have faced than go through another minute like the one I passed when the old keeper shot at the bearded head peering through the cottage window.

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